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Hitchcock and Humor: a Study in Collaborative Authorship

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Hitchcock and Humor: a Study in Collaborative Authorship

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to all those who attempt to negotiate their sense of humor with others: a most tedious, time consuming, noble, and rewarding task. Alfred Hitchcock continued his negotiations for over five decades, and for his efforts, film studies found a touch of much needed tongue-in-cheek.

Acknowledgements

I first discovered my love of classical Hollywood cinema when I moved to Austin, Texas in 2003 to pursue my bachelor's in Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas. Here, I discovered that not only were black and white films far from naïve and unsophisticated, but that it was still possible to view these films on a big screen, in 30mm, with a full audience in attendance: the Paramount, the Alamo Drafthouse, and the Dobie provided excellent programming for an aspiring cinephile year round. Next, I became aware that not only were older films amazing and physically accessible, but that legitimate careers in programming, preserving, studying and teaching classical films existed. It sounds too good to be true, but I have been immensely fortunate to find myself in the company of such programmers and scholars. Chale Nafus, Zack Carlson, and Lars Nilson are three programmers whose hard work, dedication, and endless and contagious enthusiasm have produced ongoing film series that foster an atmosphere where cinephiles can gather together to educate and stimulate one another. I am very grateful to call them both mentors and friends, and they have kept my love and knowledge of classical Hollywood cinema alive and flourishing.

My advisors Janet Staiger and Tom Schatz have also been great influences. Their works on classical Hollywood have been a huge inspiration. They have shown me that film history is a both relevant and worthwhile subject that one cans study as a successful and meaningful career. Their advice and encouragement on this thesis has been invaluable..

I must also acknowledge my parents for never undervaluing the importance of a liberal arts education, for providing the financial and emotion support to obtain the education, and for instilling in me a sense of humor.

Abstract

Hitchcock and Humor: a Study in Collaborative Authorship

by

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

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"Hitchcock and Humor: a Study in Collaborative Authorship" presents three case studies that examine how Hitchcock's humor, a critical component of his touch, fluctuates and varies in accordance with his collaborators and his creative control. The first collaboration addressed involves Hitchcock's dealings with producer David O Selznick on both *Rebecca* (1940) and *Spellbound* (1945). By tracing each film through its initial treatments to its final screenplay, the each man's individual contribution comes to light and explains why *Rebecca* lacks the humor required for the full Hitchcock touch whereas *Spellbound* does provide comic moments. Under Selznick, Hitchcock first established a working relationship with actor Cary Grant. The two would continue to collaborate as the years went on and made four films together in all: *Suspicion* (1941), *Notorious* (1946), *To Catch a Thief* (1955), and *North by Northwest* (1959). In each subsequent film Hitchcock's methods of humor mesh more with Grant's screwball persona culminating in a Hitchcock classic full of funny moments. Along with Hitchcock's wit and Grant's physical comedy, *North by Northwest* owes a debt of gratitude to its screenwriter Ernest Lehman who created the original script simply out of sketches of characters and moments. The

third case study examines the humor in *Frenzy* (1972). While Hitchcock's recent films had failed to reproduce the Hitchcock touch for an uncharacteristic lack of humor, *Frenzy* is laced with tongue-in-cheek action. The story was based on Arthur La Bern's novel *Goodbye Piccadilly, Farewell Leicester Square* (1972) and was adapted to the screen by playwright Anthony Shaffer to create what many call Hitchcock's return to form.

These case studies reveal that the inclusion of humor in Hitchcock's films comes about when Hitchcock has the freedom away from the pressures of the studio and studio heads to assert his creative control with the collaborators and films of his choosing, preferably collaborators whose aesthetics compliment his own, and preferably films whose genre allows for generous tongue-in-cheek.

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Introduction

Alfred Hitchcock began working in the movies in 1920 at the age of 21 by writing and designing title cards. In 1925, he directed his first film *The Pleasure Garden,* and by 1926 he found critical acclaim with his first thriller film, *The Lodger*. Throughout the '30s, his reputation flourished and successful thrillers such as *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) and *The 39 Steps* (1935) earned him the title "The Master of Suspense."[1] With his move to America in 1938, Hitchcock found himself in the company of studio elites and renowned Hollywood stars of whom he took full advantage to continue putting out box-office hits. Although still confined to the artistic limitations of the studio system, Hitchcock maintained a high level of control over his pictures, carefully planning every shot in preproduction and editing in camera allowing for little deviation in post-production. This involvement assured each picture would bear distinct traces of Hitchcock's authorial presence which in turn created certain expectations audiences would bring with them to a viewing of a Hitchcock film. By placing recurring motifs and thematic elements in each of his films, Hitchcock began crafting his own brand name, and like a top-billed star, having this brand name above the title fostered ticket sales. By the '50s, Hitchcock's television show *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* had reached a level of popularity so high any household in America with a television would be sure to know the name Hitchcock and to associate it with thriller stories of murder and suspense. His comedic introductions and conclusions to each television show along with his famous cameo appearances in each of his films also provided his viewers with a recognizable face and body to put with the name. Such

[1] For further reading on his reputation as a thriller director, Kapsis 22.

physical visibility extended to Hitchcock's film trailers where he often took the viewers on a comical guided tour through the films' sets.

But what exactly do viewers expect from a Hitchcock film? Is it nothing more than suspense, murder, and a brief comical cameo? If that were the case, why have not more Hitchcock copycats succeeded in amassing the popularity of the public? Hitchcock crafted a brand that on the surface may appear simple and accessible, allowing for a mass following, but this illusion of ease only adds credence to his title of master. One expects something else from a Hitchcock film other than murder, something more than his anticipated cameos. There is a consciously crafted film style and a particular tone and mood set by both the director's narrative and formal elements that many have settled on simply calling the Hitchcock touch.[2] Scholars have attempted to define this touch in various ways.

For example, Thomas Leitch uses "The Hitchcock Touch" as the title of his foreword in *The Encyclopedia of Alfred Hitchcock* (2002) and finds the following plot elements as reasons for Hitchcock's popularity: an average person is thrown into an extraordinary situation; an average, suspected and often charming person plays the villain; a setting seems rather ordinary on the surface; and a frequent use of the MacGuffin keeps the action moving.[3] Leitch expounds on each element and ends with a mention of "the sardonic bits of black comedy that Hitchcock regularly injected into his movies" to define the touch.[4] However, many of these plot elements are not unique to Hitchcock. Thrillers often manipulate the viewers' position by making the hero someone with whom they can easily identify and placing the action in an ordinary setting. In fact, slasher franchises such as *Scream* depend on this viewer alignment for effect. Like Leitch,

[2] This alludes to "The Lubitsch Touch," a phrase used by critics and scholars to describe Ernst Lubitsch's unique handiwork.
[3] Leitch, 2002, x-xi
[4] Ibid.

Laurent Bouzereau uses the title "The Hitchcock Touch" for a section of his recent work *Hitchcock Piece by Piece* (2010). Here, he points out common themes, particular characters, and certain kinds of music in Hitchcock's oeuvre but places emphasis on visual style, arguing, "above all these elements, however, the director's original camerawork reigns."[5] Hitchcock's own daughter Patricia Hitchcock O'Connell describes Hitchcock's cinematic method as "a bit of mystery and suspense, some romance, and of course, humor to top it all off."[6]

Each of these attempts to define what makes Hitchcock's films distinctly Hitchcockian has brought up valid points worthy of explication. Not one of these definitions excludes another, but it is curious to note the different emphasis each applies to different elements of the touch. An abundant amount of work exists on Hitchcock's use of suspense; after all, by the late thirties critics had proclaimed him its master, and books and articles on his stylistic practices, and romantic themes also proliferate the shelves of film studies' libraries.[7] However, my own interest is in Hitchcock's use of humor. This element has had its share of scholarly critique as well as my review of the literature will attest, but where the criticism on Hitchcock's humor falls short is in scholars' attempts to explain the various and inconsistent techniques of humor used throughout Hitchcock's oeuvre. His British films typically make use of humor techniques found in comedies of manner and romantic screwballs while his later American films often rely on black or macabre humor. Sometimes, the jokes are entirely verbal, at other times physical humor takes over, and in a handful of films no humor exists.

This observation led me into researching the typologies of humor in an attempt to find scholars who have devoted serious thought to how and when different types of humor occur.

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[5] Bouzereau 129
[6] Pat O'Connell 2
[7] A perfect example of a definitive work on Hitchcock and suspense is William Hare's *Hitchcock and the Methods of Suspense* (2007).

The most inclusive and detailed study I came upon was Arthur Asa Berger's *An Anatomy of Humor* (1993).

Typologies of Humor

In his book, Berger presents what he believes is a comprehensive and exclusive list of forty-five techniques of humor he has found by analyzing various forms of media. He breaks these techniques down into four categories: language (verbal), logic (ideational), identity (existential), and action (physical/ non-verbal). Thus, techniques such as irony, exaggeration, and puns fall under language; absurdity, repetition, and coincidence are under logic; stereotype, parody, and imitation exist under identity; and chase, slapstick, and speed appear under action.[8] While he demonstrates a competency in humor theory, citing Aristotle, Kant, Bergson, and Freud, Berger seeks not to try to understand why we laugh but what it is that makes us laugh.

In their article "Developing a Typology of Humor in Audiovisual Media," Moniek Buijzen and Patti M. Valkenburg attempt to adjust Berger's typology which he applied to verbal jokes so as to apply it to the audiovisual media. Like Berger, they take different theories of humor into account to offer a brief description of the following three (which they use interchangeably with theories of laughter): relief theory, "people laugh because they need to reduce physiological tension from time to time"; superiority theory, "people laugh because they feel some kind of triumph over others or feel superior to them"; and incongruity theory, "people laugh at things that are unexpected or surprising."[9] The latter emphasizes cognition and relies upon an ability to understand incongruous events. After conducting an analysis of 30 humorous commercials, Buijzen and Valkenburg conclude "that most of the inductively established humor

[8] Berger 17
[9] Buijzen 147

techniques cluster together into higher order categories of humor. However, instead of the four categories proposed by Berger, [their] study yielded seven humor categories: slapstick, clownish humor, surprise, misunderstanding, irony, satire, and parody."[10]

Ultimately, Berger does not seek out the answer to "*why* something was funny (we may never really know) but *what* was it that generated the humor."[11] Berger states that humorists use the various techniques subconsciously. They are not intentionally formulated, "but they use these techniques, in various permutations and combinations, based, in large part, on their experiences, their memories about 'what worked' in earlier books, performances, and so on."[12] Following Berger's reasoning, I am hypothosizing that Hitchcock's humor varies across his career because of the multiple experiences and memories at work when Hitchcock must negotiate his humor with collaborators. Therefore, my ultimate question veers off from Berger's "*what* generates the humor" to "*who* generates the humor" with regards to Hitchcock's films.

Review of the Literature

My literature review will begin with an overview of the scholarly research on Hitchcock's humor, organized somewhat by the complexity of the argument. It begins with simple categorizations of Hitchcock's humor, moves into the field of psychoanalysis, and concludes with ideas of tonal slippage and the inconsistencies across Hitchcock's oeuvre. As I suspect the inconsistencies result from a change in collaborators, I will provide a literature review on Hitchcock and collaborative authorship. The literature here is more abundant than on Hitchcock's humor, and I have presented it in a chronological fashion to show how Hitchcock authorship studies closely followed that of film authorship studies as a whole.

[10] Buijzen 162
[11] Berger 16
[12] Berger 55

Glenn D. Novak's essay "Humor in the Films of Alfred Hitchcock" (1986) approaches Hitchcock's humor as comic relief and divides his humor into four categories: Hitchcock's cameo appearances, his exaggerated and stereotypical characterizations, his insertion of sexual innuendo, and his macabre humor, which Novak sees resulting "from the juxtaposition of the horrible or dangerous with the absurd or mundane."[13] Novak concludes that Hitchcock's humor is a form of black comedy where laughter is needed to release the frustration or anguish caused by the shocking, grisly details and the idea of a murderer running loose in a safe, mundane environment.[14] This essay is useful for calling attention to the prevalence of humor in Hitchcock's films, but Novak oversimplifies the way this humor works, and his categorizations point to the obvious. James Naremore takes a psychoanalytic approach in his article "Hitchcock and Humor" (2001), using Freud's and Breton's theories of black humor to define Hitchcock's humor as "the affective quality of amusing anxiety."[15] Naremore argues Hitchcock is "the artist most responsible for bringing a spirit of surrealist laughter into the vernacular modernism of Hollywood movies."[16]

In *Hitchcock: Suspense, Humour and Tone* (2000), Susan Smith argues Hitchcock's use of humor as a counter-balance of suspense creates a tonal slippage that "often contributes substantially to dislodging the security of the viewer's position."[17] The two work interdependently, for "in placing the audience in such a state of helpless laughter it renders them even more susceptible to the attack which follows."[18] However, Smith is careful to point out that many of Hitchcock's American films lack this interdependency of comedy and suspense. She

[13] Novak 6
[14] Novak 12
[15] Naremore, 2001, 14
[16] Naremore, 2001, 19
[17] Smith 49
[18] Ibid.

finds a pattern which "[consists] of a release of humour in one film followed by a more restrained phase then a return of comic energy."[19] Smith astutely observes a troubling inconsistency but does not attempt to offer an explanation for it. Not all of Hitchcock's films contain humor, and many suffer from its absence. Exceptions are *Rebecca* (1940) and *Notorious* (1946), which lack humor but still fared well with the box-offices and critics alike.

Thus, if one accepts that humor is a vital component of the Hitchcock touch, how does one account for the inconsistencies and fluctuations of humor throughout Hitchcock's directorial career? To begin to answer this question, I will look at his films in their fuller context. A Hollywood picture does not come into being from the director alone. A film is a collaborative process with multiple authors who each contribute unique, individual visions to create the big picture. Therefore, it is crucial to approach Hitchcock's films with theories of authorship as other scholars have.

Considering collaborative authorship may seem an obvious choice for film studies today, but for Hitchcock to find a serious foothold in the world of scholarly debate, it first took a group of French critics to employ what is now considered by many to be an outdated approach to authorship, the auteur theory.[20] Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, two French film critics who helped fashion the "Politique des Auteurs" while writing for *Cahiers du cinéma*, compiled the first comprehensive and serious study of Hitchcock's works in their book *Hitchcock: The First Forty-Four Films* (1957). As the title suggests, the two analyze the formal elements and narrative content of each Hitchcock picture that had been released up to that date in chronological order concluding the struggle for a moral universe is the overarching theme across the oeuvre. Like Rhomer and Chabrol, François Truffaut was another French filmmaker and

[19] Ibid.
[20] For further reading on how Hitchcock gained auteur status by French critics see James M. Vest's *Hitchcock and France: The Forging of an Auteur* (2003).

Cahiers du cinéma critic enamored with Hitchcock. His book *Hitchcock* assembles a series of interviews with Hitchcock spanning over twenty years in an attempt to justify why Hitchcock should be viewed as an artist. Labeling Hitchcock a true auteur, Truffaut argues, "Because he exercises such complete control over all the elements of his films and imprints his personal concepts at each step of the way, Hitchcock has a distinctive style of his own."[21]

By the '80s, the popularity of poststructuralism replaced Robin Wood's question "Why we should take Hitchcock so seriously" with "Why we should be careful not to take Hitchcock too seriously." To keep up with the theory, Hitchcock scholars turned away from a strictly auteur approach to a refined approach to authorship. Now, studies of collaborative authorship emerged.

In *Hitchcock and Selznick: The Rich and Strange Collaboration* (1999), Leonard Leff credits Selznick with turning Hitchcock from an amateur director obsessed with "gags and bits of business and tricks" into a mature artist who pays attention to character.

> For Hitchcock too often matched his cleverly reasoned visual logic with pallid characterization. [Selznick] not only conceived pictures outwardly, from 'big broad strokes,' he also believed you first decide what the characters are going to do. Then, you provide them with enough characteristics to make it seem plausible that they should do it.[22]

However, whether Selznick added plausibility to these pictures is a question I will raise later.

In *Framing Hitchcock* (2002), Sidney Gottlieb and Christopher Brookhouse include two interviews with screenwriters Evan Hunter and Jay Presson Allen in an attempt to counter the concern for valorization that so easily arises from a single author study by acknowledging the collaborative process of any Hollywood film and as a way to show the weaknesses of interviews

[21] Truffaut 18
[22] Leff 46

as primary sources for academic study.[23] Christina Lane's article, "Stepping out From Behind the Grand Silhouette: Joan Harrison's films of the 1940's" (2003), specifically traces Joan Harrison's authorial agency in her collaborative experience with Hitchcock with particular emphasis on Harrison's role in contributing to his female characters in films of the early '40s.

Scholars Steven DeRosa and Thomas Leitch both attribute much of Hitchcock's success to his writers. In *Writing with Hitchcock* (2001), DeRosa studies the five Hitchcock films with screenwriter John Michael Hayes: *Rear Window* (1954), *To Catch a Thief* (1955), *The Trouble with Harry* (1955), and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956). He argues Hayes contributed "richly drawn, sympathetic characters" with themes involving "the individual becoming one with his community."[24] DeRosa then looks at the films immediately following Hayes's bitter departure from Hitchcock: *The Wrong Man* (1956), *Vertigo* (1958), *North by Northwest* (1959), *Psycho* (1960), *The Birds* (1963), and *Marnie* (1964). In these, he observes, "The rounded characters of the Hitchcock-Hayes films, which shared an optimistic viewpoint, were shoved aside in favor of the emotionally haunted characters who occupied such films as *The Wrong Man*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, *The Birds,* and *Marnie*,"[25] and "the absence of Hayes from these films resulted in an uncharacteristic lack of humor in Hitchcock's work."[26] I would argue that this is an over simplification, and that while *The Wrong Man* (1956) certainly offers no comedic relief, *Psycho* (1960) and *Vertigo* (1958) have intentionally placed humorous moments.[27] Still, the effects of writers must be considered when examining Hitchcock's trajectory.

[23] Brookhouse and Gottlieb 13-24
[24] DeRosa XII
[25] DeRosa 204
[26] DeRosa XIII
[27] The collaboration ended when Hitchcock tried to share Hayes's credit for the screenplay of *The Man who Knew too Much* (1956) with Angus MacPhail.

Leitch also places importance on Hitchcock's writers, and in "The Adapter as Auteur: Hitchcock, Kubrick, Disney," he calls attention to the fact that most of Hitchcock's films are adaptations. However, "In order to establish himself as an auteur, […] Hitchcock had to wrest authorship of his films away from another plausible candidate: the author of the original property," and thus, by "avoiding brand-name authors like Dostoevsky, Hitchcock created his own brand-name franchise by steamrolling authors whose work he coveted."[28]

While producers and writers easily make their way into collaborative studies of film productions, Pat Hitchcock O'Connell brings to light another essential collaborator on her father's films: her mother, Alma Reville. In her book *Alma Hitchcock: The Woman Behind the Man* (2003), O'Connell explains, "Pre-production on my father's films was most crucial simply because that was when he made all the important decisions with Alma as his closest collaborator," and "[Alma] maintained the creative involvement in his films and in his career to the end."[29]

As this review attests, much has been written on Hitchcock and his collaborators. What has received less attention, however, is how and when his collaborators helped or hindered the Hitchcock touch of humor from emerging as this is the component of the touch that seems to be the most variable over his career. Therefore, the question I will now endeavor to answer is: how does Hitchcock negotiate the creation of humor with his collaborators?

Methodology and Chapters

I arrived at my case studies for the following reasons: I wanted to deal with collaborators in various job codes and focus on not only writers (as has been the most popular amongst

[28] Leitch, 2005, 110
[29] O'Connell 2

scholars) but on influential producers and actors as well; I wanted to rely heavily on archival materials for evidence and had the Harry Ransom Center and the Margaret Herrick Library as my available outlets (thus the focus on Hitchcock's American films); and I wanted to look at films from multiple decades to see how factors such as maturity and increased creative control contributed to the type and amount of humor in Hitchcock's films.

My first chapter involves David O Selznick. The two men made three films together during Hitchcock's seven-year contract. The first two, *Rebecca* (1940) and *Spellbound* (1945), received wide-spread recognition and are the focus of my study. By tracing each film through its initial treatments to its final screenplay, I locate each man's individual contribution to the final picture and try to explain why *Rebecca* lacks the humor required for the full Hitchcock touch whereas *Spellbound* does provide comic moments. The archives have proven to be an invaluable resource for this chapter, for to avoid face-to-face conflict, Selznick became notorious for his interoffice memos. While the recipients of such passive-aggressive maneuvers must have at times suffered annoyance, the vast collection of personal notes housed at the Harry Ransom Center is a godsend to academics and archivists wishing to delve into the process of collaboration for past films.

My second chapter looks at Hitchcock's working relationship with actor Cary Grant. The two made four films together: *Suspicion* (1941), *Notorious* (1946), *To Catch a Thief* (1955), and *North by Northwest* (1959). By analyzing these films chronologically, I observe how Hitchcock learned over time to mesh Grant's screwball persona with his own methods of humor. In *Suspicion*, Grant's character is suspected for much of the film of plotting his wife's murder. This went against Grant's persona as a quirky fun-loving romantic lead. While this off casting makes for an interesting viewing, Hitchcock received much feedback that audiences would not accept

Grant as a villain, and from then on, he only used Grant as the leading lover. However, it was not until *North by Northwest* that Hitchcock finally placed Grant in a role that would fully utilize his screwball abilities. Here, Grant has the freedom to show off his physical humor and quirky mannerisms, allowing for what Andrew Britton calls "the comedy of male chastisement."[30] Thus, the bulk of this chapter focuses on *North by Northwest* where yet another important collaborator demands attention. Screenwriter Ernest Lehman was a critical component during both preproduction and the actual filming. To research his contributions, I turned once more to the Harry Ransom Center's film archive where the Ernest Lehman Collection could be readily accessed.

My third chapter also deals with Hitchcock's collaboration with writers. Here, I looked at *Frenzy* (1972). While his recent films had failed to reproduce the Hitchcock touch for an uncharacteristic lack of humor, in *Frenzy* Hitchcock once more proved his mastery of witty banter and suspense laced with tongue-in-cheek action. The story was based on Arthur La Bern's novel *Goodbye Piccadilly, Farewell Leicester Square* (1972) and was adapted to the screen by playwright Anthony Shaffer to create what many call Hitchcock's return to form.

Ultimately and predictably, the answer to how Hitchcock negotiates his humor with his collaborators cannot be neatly summed up into a definitive equation. Each collaboration is unique, and while I have had fortunate access to three archival collections, much of the filmmaking process is speculation. The conclusions I arrive at are as follows: Not all of Hitchcock's films contain humor, but the ones that do, regardless of the type of humor, are the ones that intrinsically feel more "Hitchcockian" and can be accepted more readily into the canon of Hitchcock masterpieces. The inclusion of humor comes about when Hitchcock has the freedom away from the pressures of the studio and studio heads to assert his creative control with

[30] Britton 5

the collaborators and films of his choosing, preferably collaborators whose aesthetics compliment his own, and preferably films whose genre allows for generous tongue-in-cheek. The inconsistencies and fluctuations of humor in his films have less to do with maturity over time than with creative control. When he can insert humor, he will. But when and how this is done depends largely on factors often outside his control.

Chapter One: Selznick and Hitchcock: A Conflict of Interest or A Dynamic Duo

By the late '30s, Alfred Hitchcock had his sights set on Hollywood. He had established a name for himself in Britain as a director of thrillers beginning with *The Lodger* in 1926 which he made for Gainsborough Pictures. His career flourished when he moved to Gaumont-British Picture Corporation in 1933. Here, he directed *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *The 39 Steps* (1935), and *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), all commercial and critical successes which solidified his title as "Master of Suspense" and manifested his distinctive touch. The latter two especially rely upon humor (an integral part of Hitchcock's touch) as they are first and foremost screwball comedies (though underscored with a political thriller premise) full of slapstick gags and witty dialogue. As his fame grew, Hitchcock coveted large budget productions with A-list stars, both of which he could not obtain while staying in Britain.

In 1935, David O. Selznick's career was flourishing, and his productions of highbrow prestige pictures including *David Copperfield* (1935), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935), and *Anna Karenina* (1935) for MGM all found critical and commercial acclaim. This same year he ventured out on his own and opened an independent studio Selznick International Pictures (SIP). Here, he continued to produce prestige films such as *A Star is Born* (1937) and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1938) as well as the occasional comedy such as *Nothing Sacred* (1937), *The Young in Heart* (1938), and *Made for Each Other* (1939). With Selznick's studio experience, access to Hollywood stars, ability to turn a film into a blockbuster sensation all the while still operating an independent and seemingly freer mode, Selznick International Pictures was an enticing studio to Hitchcock. Likewise, Hitchcock's growingly recognizable name, good track

record, and unprecedented ability to visualize the entire movement of a film from the mere pages of the script could greatly benefit Selznick.[31] After months of negotiations, Selznick signed Hitchcock to a seven-year contract that gave Selznick the exclusive right to loan Hitchcock out to other studios and mandated he direct at least three pictures for Selznick International Pictures. These three would include *Rebecca* (1940), *Spellbound* (1945), and *The Paradine Case* (1947). All three fared well at the box offices, and both *Rebecca* and *Spellbound* resulted in Academy Award nominations for both Selznick and Hitchcock.[32] So this collaboration appeared mutually beneficial. However, this relationship was not without friction.

Selznick and Hitchcock's differing aesthetic values along with each man's own personal motivations made working together a somewhat tension-filled and frustrating task. Selznick often relied on literary masterpieces for their renowned stories that the audience would take seriously while Hitchcock had found fame by associating his name with the lowbrow thriller genre that allowed him to focus on form and affect over what he called the story content. Hitchcock expressed his indifference for content in multiple interviews throughout his career stating, "I don't give a damn what the film's about. What I'm concerned with is the manner of telling the story and how you put your scenes together, and in consequence create an emotion in an audience."[33] While this is partly overstatement for dramatic effect, Hitchcock's films do rely heavily on camera work and subjective points of view, sometimes in lieu of also creating confusing story lines and irrelevant MacGuffins.

Their conflicting views on the importance of narrative came to a head as they began to collaborate on literary adaptations. Hitchcock explained his approach to François Truffaut stating, "What I do is to read a story only once, and if I like the basic idea, I just forget all about

[31] Hitchcock explains how he visualizes each film in an interview with AFI in '72. See Gottlieb 90.
[32] Selznick took home the Oscar for best picture for *Rebecca*.
[33] Gottlieb 79

the book and start to create cinema."[34] However, Hitchcock shied away from any story he considered a literary masterpiece, a fine novel that has taken the author years to write. For example, he scoffed at the idea of adapting Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* because "to really convey that in cinematic terms, substituting the language of the camera for the written word, one would have to make a six-to-ten hour film. Otherwise, it [wouldn't] be any good."[35] But Selznick had created a brand name dependent on literary adaptations. He approached the adaptation process with the ardent fans of the novel in mind attempting to remain faithful to the text.

After presenting Hitchcock with a picture, Selznick gave him room to work closely with the writers and develop the first treatments of the story. However, these treatments differ dramatically from the finished films, for, upon review, Selznick hired other writers and called for immense changes to the scripts. These changes often involved the omission of humor. Since Hitchcock's films with humor carry more of his authorial voice than those without humor, Selznick's revisions have a direct impact on how one reads these films in terms of authorship. Selznick's treatments, scripts, interoffice memos, production notes, and other personal communication can be found in the David O. Selznick Collection at the Harry Ransom Center. By digging through these archives, closely analyzing the film's texts in terms of narrative and form, and reading Hitchcock's interviews, I have attempted to trace the trajectory of Selznick and Hitchcock's joint efforts on each of their pictures from initial treatments to final shooting scripts. This chapter focuses on the collaborative process involved with the making of *Rebecca* and *Spellbound*.[36]

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[34] Truffaut 72
[35] Ibid.
[36] The third film was *The Paradine Case* (1947). Hitchcock directed this out of contractual obligation. By this time, he had grown tired of putting up with Selznick's interference and was looking to break the relationship after the

Rebecca

Rebecca (1940) tells the story of a young, unnamed girl (Joan Fontaine) whose life changes dramatically when she marries wealthy Englishman Maxim de Winter (Laurence Olivier) and takes up the role of proprietress at his mansion, Manderley. Once here, the girl finds adapting to her new life a daunting task, and she commits one faux pas after another. The haunting memory of Maxim's late wife Rebecca, who we are told died in a boating accident the year before, and the ubiquitous presence of Mrs. Danvers (Judith Anderson), the housekeeper who had been a devout admirer of Rebecca, only add to the girl's discomfort. Even Maxim provides little comfort and states he may have made a mistake in marrying her. Eventually, the truth comes out, and the girl learns Rebecca's death was the result of an accidental scuffle between husband and wife; Maxim long ago had fallen out of love with his first wife, who treated him cruelly and was often unfaithful. The film ends with Manderley in flames, and the lovers reunited.

When Truffaut asked if Hitchcock was satisfied with *Rebecca,* the latter replied:

> Well, it's not a Hitchcock picture; it's a novelette, really. The story is old-fashioned; there was a whole school of feminine literature at the period, and though I'm not against it, the fact is that the story is lacking in humor.[37]

Indisputably, Hitchcock's signature humor is missing from this gothic melodrama. No comedic releases or insertions of British wit exist. However, this lack was not for want of Hitchcock trying.

As the novel *Rebecca* did not fall under the category of literary masterpiece, Hitchcock had no qualms with adapting and significantly altering it to the screen. Selznick had set his focus on opening *Gone with the Wind*, so during the initial treatments, Hitchcock was left largely alone

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contract ended the next year. Hitchcock did not particularly care for *The Paradine Case* and told *François* Truffaut that Selznick's miscasting was detrimental to the story. See Truffaut 173.

[37] Truffaut 127

to use his own method of "forget about the book and create cinema" approach to adaptation. In the first treatment, Hitchcock took many liberties with the text, especially in the opening scenes as the couple fall in love. The novel uses first-person narration and takes us directly into the mind of the young girl. The first chapters rely heavily on her thoughts and mental observations; there is little action and no way of knowing what is going on in Maxim's head or why he is suddenly attracted to the girl. Often, the scenes between the two have little dialogue. At their first meal together, still just mere acquaintances, the girl recollects, "His quality of detachment was peculiar to himself, and I knew that we might continue thus, without speaking, throughout the meal and it would not matter." Then, "[they eat] for a while without talking," and the girl reminisces about purchasing a postcard of Manderley when she was a child.[38]

Nothing is very cinematic in this novel. Relying on first-person narration to uncover the psychological motivations of a character works fine for a gothic novel, but to create cinema, Hitchcock needed something more visual: another way to reveal the girl's character without saturating the film in voice-over.[39] He found a potential means to this end in humor and recommended "a gag between [the couple], or a game or anything," something one could visually see die away when they reach Manderley.[40] Hitchcock acknowledged the ultimate decision to introduce humor into the girl's character rested with Selznick, but he urged that the girl "be fairly bright, attractive and amusing enough to take de Winter out of his morbid state" with "enough personality to change his mood even, so that something cheerfully optimistic is

[38] Du Maurier 23
[39] The film opens with Joan Fontaine's voice-over. She gives us the first lines from the novel. However, this is soon abandoned for the entirety of the film.
[40] Letter from Hitchcock to Selznick, 11/13/38, Selznick Collection, Box 172

built up between these two."[41] This cheerful optimism would provide a strong contrast to the couple's arrival at Manderley where a bitter fatalism would take over.

By the third treatment, Hitchcock and his writers, Joan Harrison, Michael Hogan, and Philip MacDonald, had inserted a fair amount of humor into the beginning scenes that achieved this effect.[42] Here, Maxim and the girl speak frequently, and their conversations are full of playfulness and wit. The couple's first lunch together include fun anecdotes such as when the girl admits to Maxim, "I always want to laugh at the wrong moments. Like when Mrs. Van Hopper was invited to the Turkish embassy and insisted on our taking our shoes off at the door."[43] This particular example has Hitchcock written all over it.[44] The girl then explains Mrs. Van Hopper's method of preventing heavy colds.

> We have to distend our nostrils, breathe in, and say 'gong.' It looks so funny….like this. [She tries to illustrate it, but breaks down in the middle into a suppressed laugh.] The girl of the novel has no such sense of humor. She finds her employer's behavior mortifying and is often "wretchedly embarrassed" and "stricken into shame."[45]

Maxim's behavior also differs markedly from novel to the third treatment. The new Maxim constantly breaks into laughter when he is with the girl. She brings him to life, and inspires in him a carefree spontaneity, and we can visually see him falling in love. Marriage is inevitable. The playful dialogue continues through the wedding. The ceremony has been performed entirely in French, and when the girl asks, "What was all that?" Maxim replies, "I didn't get it all, but the end bit said that I have to entertain you in my home to the best of my ability and supply you with all the necessities according to my means. (smiling down at her) Is

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Harrison was a secretary Hitchcock had brought over from London; MacDonald, a Scottish novelist-playwright; and Hogan, a British writer. All three worked with Hitchcock on the initial treatments.
[43] "Third treatment," Harrison, Hitchcock, Hogan, and MacDonald, 6/20/39, Selznick Collection. Box 493.
[44] Hitchcock was notorious for his use of anecdotes. For a good example, see Gottlieb 122
[45] "Third treatment," Harrison, Hitchcock, Hogan, and MacDonald, 6/20/39, Selznick Collection. Box 493.

that all right?"[46] He then breaks into a grin, grabs the whole contents of a nearby flower lady's basket, and throws them onto the girl's lap. This is done with an unmitigated sincerity. In the novel, the wedding is skipped over entirely, and in the final film, the ceremony is rushed, little dialogue exchanged, and the flowers seem like a mere afterthought. The film's Maxim always looks distracted and pays little attention to the girl's needs.[47]

From novel to treatment, the plot essentially remains unaltered; it is the characters who change. With his collaborators, Hitchcock turned the simple, taciturn young girl into a fun, boisterous character who can believably attract the affections of an older gentleman looking for any means to escape from a sordid past. Hitchcock and crew create a carefree mood in these beginning scenes that give the later scenes at Manderley something concrete with which to contrast which results in an air of heightened suspense when the memory of Rebecca and the presence of Mrs. Danvers begin to crush the spirit of the young girl. This change in character through humor introduces plausibility as the couple's initial attraction to one another is more credible.

While this may be an honest attempt at achieving a story full of cinematic moments, Hitchcock's method of adaptation can also be read as a branding strategy. Thomas Leitch argues,

> In order to establish himself as an auteur, Hitchcock had to wrest authorship of his films away from another plausible candidate: the author of the original property. […] Avoiding brand-name authors like Dostoevsky, Hitchcock created his own brand-name franchise by steamrolling authors whose work he coveted.[48]

Leitch's language is harsh and a little unfair, but it is worth considering that Hitchcock had his own agenda to fulfill when it came to adapting the novel. The evidence is that he tried to

[46] Ibid.
[47] This is partly a result of casting Laurence Olivier in the role. He offered little sympathy to the character and often sped over his lines, an annoyance to both Hitchcock and Selznick.
[48] Leitch 110

introduce humor, and we know Hitchcock does not consider this a Hitchcock film partly because of its absence.

The final say on the script would go to Selznick who had his own method of literary adaptations: a method that was also integral to creating a brand-name. In "Brand-Name Literature: Film Adaptation and Selznick International Pictures' *Rebecca* (1940)," Kyle Edwards analyzes how:

> SIP employed an elaborate marketing campaign around both the novel and the film to reinforce a brand that the company had been developing for several years. This branding was used to secure favorable terms with distributors and to distinguish the studio for audiences. Adapting internationally renowned literary sources enabled SIP to streamline the story development process, promise a built-in audience to distributors and exhibitors, and fulfill its goal of producing 'prestige' pictures.[49]

Thus, Selznick responded to Hitchcock's unfaithfulness to the novel in the initial treatment with shock and dismay. In one of his infamous memos, Selznick informed Hitchcock:

> In my opinion, the only thing that is justified by the difference in medium is a difference in the manner in which a scene is told; and the only omissions from a successful work that are justified are omissions necessitated by length, censorship, or other practical considerations. Readers of a dearly loved book will forgive omissions if there is an obvious reason for them; but very properly, they will not forgive substitutions.[50]

He accused Hitchcock of letting his ego run wild and argued that while he had his own ego, it "is not so great that it cannot be held in check on the adaptation of a successful work." Selznick was especially angered with the insertion of a scene taking place on the Rivera in which Maxim playfully blows a cloud of smoke into the girl's face, and she heaves over the edge of the boat. Selznick exclaims, "If there is any humor let on the screen in seasickness, let's for God's sake leave it to the two-reel comedies and not get our picture off on a low note by indulging in such scenes."[51]

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[49] Edwards 36
[50] Letter from DOS to Hitchcock, 6/12/39, Selznick Collection, Box 172.
[51] Ibid.

So, from the beginning, Selznick and Hitchcock had conflicting self interests, each trying to reinforce a particular brand-name: Selznick's based on faithful, prestigious adaptations and Hitchcock's on a unique blend of cinematic visuals, suspense, and humor. As Selznick had last say, Hitchcock's initial treatment was thoroughly worked over. The playful moments between the two lovers were abandoned, and the novel's timid, taciturn girl replaced the loquacious, lively girl. Selznick's assertions that Hitchcock's unfaithfulness to the novel shocked and angered Selznick the most must be taken with a skeptical eye, for the final script still has many points of divergence from the original novel, some of which crucially change the major themes of Du Maurier's work. The most striking difference involves the death of Rebecca. Both novel and film reveal that before her death Rebecca discovers she has cancer. She keeps this a secret and resolves to die by any other means. Seeing Maxim as a possible solution, she tells him she is pregnant with another man's child and laughs in his face. In the novel, Maxim recalls how "she went on laughing. I thought she would never stop." So finally, the novel's Maxim shoots Rebecca through the heart, and "she was still smiling."[52] The production code specifically forbade a murderer to go unpunished. If remorse was felt, perhaps this could have been argued, but the novel's Maxim insists, "I'm glad I killed Rebecca, I shall never have any remorse for that, never, never."[53] Selznick had no choice but to find an alternative, and he turned Rebecca's death into an accident. In the film, as she challenges Maxim to kill her, Rebecca trips, hits her head, and dies. Maxim panics, moves her body to her boat, and fakes a boating accident. While this is a major alteration to the plot, the themes remain intact for the most part. Karen Hollinger admits this change does not alter the heroine's oedipal drama "because in both novel and film the strength of Rebecca's challenge to patriarchal control is affirmed by the over-determined nature

[52] Du Maurier 279
[53] Du Maurier 299

of her destruction."[54] And though an accident, we can readily believe Maxim would have murdered her. His need to cover up the real event is a clear indication of a guilty conscious.

Still, many of Selznick's changes from novel to film had nothing whatsoever to do with the production code: most notably, the burning of Manderley and the suicidal death of Mrs. Danvers. In the novel, Maxim and the girl are driving to Manderley together when the girl sees a mysterious light coming from the mansion still miles away. The novel ends with these last lines, "The sky on the horizon was not dark at all. It was shot with crimson, like a splash of blood. And the ashes blew towards us with the salt wind from the sea."[55] Selznick had won audience approval by using great visual effects in *Gone with the Wind* as Atlanta burned and was not about to let an opportunity to once more provide spectacle pass by him. Instead of seeing the flames from a distance, the film puts the girl inside the burning house. Maxim drives up to the house in fear, the girl manages to escape the fire, and the two fall into a loving embrace while the house magnificently burns behind them. While this directly changes the film from the novel, Edwards argues it still fits into SIP's brand-name as it

> communicates a number of distinct statements: to audiences […]SIP spared no expense in presenting visually stunning images to consumers; to rival studios, this independent studio distinguished itself by purchasing the most expensive stories, producing them on a large scale, and attracting the largest audiences; to distributors and exhibitors, an SIP picture was an unparalleled cinematic event that could bring patrons into theatres at a higher admission price than other studio releases.[56]

It is a visually stunning end to the film, but it does present a thematic problem. In the novel, Mrs. Danvers survives, and the girl is left wondering what she is doing now. And through Mrs. Danvers, a trace of Rebecca and of Manderley wanders free. In the film, Mrs. Danvers commits suicide in the fire, and Hollinger exclaims, this "ending emphasizes the strength of the

[54] Hollinger 25
[55] Du Maurier 380
[56] Edwards 43

marital bond as a means of defeating maternal power rather than Rebecca's continued influence over this lost, troubled couple," and "the heroine's maturity results from the complete destruction of every remnant of Rebecca…Mrs. Danvers is destroyed in the fire as is the last symbol of Rebecca's power, the letter R embroidered by Mrs. Danvers on Rebecca's pillowcase."[57]

With this evidence, I argue that Selznick's outrage at Hitchcock's first treatment went beyond issues of adaptation faithfulness. Hitchcock diverged from the novel, but he did so to heighten character and plausibility, as well as provide entertainment by introducing humor. Mixing humor with the macabre made Hitchcock's authorship discernible. But this production was not to be just another Hitchcock vehicle. Selznick had his own authorship to reinforce, and while his story diverged from the novel as well, his changes resulted in heightened drama and visual spectacle, two elements essential for a SIP prestige picture, plausible characterizations aside. Nevertheless, Leonard Leff still argues, "Unlike the thirties Hitchcock, the *Rebecca* screenplay links the cool, stable surfaces of 'things' to the perturbed characters' desires and fears. […] The shadow of Selznick had wrung the melodrama from Hitchcock."[58] Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol also see *Rebecca* as "the first manifestation of mature talent" as "the gossipy and somewhat affected novel [had] become a fairytale thriller, modern and disquieting."[59] While Selznick may have turned Hitchcock into a more mature director with *Rebecca* as he forced him to take serious content seriously, Selznick lessened the effect of the "Hitchcock Touch" by removing the humor and wit added to the first treatments and introducing heightened drama.

[57] Hollinger 26
[58] Leff 54
[59] Rohmer 58

Spellbound

Four years after the release of *Rebecca,* Selznick and Hitchcock entered into their second collaboration. In the interim, Selznick loaned Hitchcock out to other studios where he directed films such as *Suspicion* (1941) for RKO and *Saboteur* (1942) and *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) for Universal. The box office success of these films helped further establish Hitchcock as the "Master of Suspense" and increased the value of his brand-name. Selznick had recently procured the rights to *The House of Dr. Edwardes*, a psychological thriller novel written by John Palmer and Hilary A. Saunders, under the pseudonym "Francis Beeding." The plot centers on an asylum where a man calling himself Dr. Edwardes has just arrived to take the position of the head director. The man quickly falls in love with his colleague Dr. Constance Sedgwick who soon discovers this man is not the real Dr. Edwardes but a patient who has usurped the doctor's identity. Hitchcock was the obvious choice to direct this thriller film. Unlike *Rebecca,* this novel had reached a limited readership so there was little fear of disappointing diehard fans with an unfaithful adaptation. As such, Selznick loosened the reigns and allowed Hitchcock to approach the first treatments on his own terms. Read the story once, forget about the text, and begin to make cinema. And of course, add humor and wit when possible.

Hitchcock went to work on the adaptation with collaborator and close friend Angus MacPhail. As Selznick had other business to attend, the two were left with considerable freedom and turned out a story based loosely on the original psychological melodrama full of gags and funny bits. Their story opens with tongue-in-cheek. The first scene shows Constance lecturing to a group of college students on psychoanalysis. She explains:

> A neurotic is like a man who shoves inconvenient letters and bills into the drawer of his desk and forgets all about them. Then one fine day he is summoned for non-payment of his debts, jailed for non-payment of his income tax.[60]

[60]Third Treatment, "The House of Dr. Edwards," MacPhail , 2/22/44, Selznick Collection, Box 511.

Such levity continues as we enter the mental ward and meet the patients undergoing therapy. The first patient, Mr. Truelow, is a megalomaniac obsessed with a new economic system which supersedes democracy, communism, and fascism and solves all the problems of humanity. Truelow asks Dr. Edwards for his opinion on a fundamental point, "Does Edwards really believe that monopoly capitalism is compatible with the true democratic freedom of the individual?" To this Edwards replies, "As a Socialist, [I consider] it totally incompatible."[61] It may seem like a fair question concerning our economic situation, but in the context of the mental ward, this patient is insane and should be treated as such. Edwards's calm reply seems sane, but it soon becomes apparent he is a crazy patient impersonating a doctor. Without question, Hitchcock and MacPhail are having a go not only at the patient but at the institutionalized system that fails to give credence to suggestions outside of democracy. Another patient, Mrs. Collett, has moments of delusion in which she thinks she is Joan of Arc. During an episode, she asks Constance to have a horse saddled for her right away. Coming out of her spell, she admits, "The silly thing is, that I don't even understand two words of French!"[62] Do these incidents produce humor at the expense of the patient as Leff implies? Perhaps, but it is not cruel humor. More than the patients, Hitchcock and MacPhail are poking fun at the very practice of psychoanalysis: a practice Selznick took very seriously.

After receiving these initial treatments, Selznick feared the story was in trouble as "MacPhail and Hitchcock had more fully realized the 'gags and bits' than the narrative itself."[63] While he desired Hitchcock for his talent and of course for his brand-name, Selznick still had his own agenda and making a purely Hitchcock film, humor and all, was not it. Selznick wanted to

[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Leff 124

treat psychoanalysis in a sensitive and accurate manner.[64] Poking fun at the inmates would not fly with him nor with the censors, and to give the treatment a thorough working over, Selznick hired screenwriter Ben Hecht. Hecht's first draft would introduce most of the plotline found in the film and start to take the patients more seriously.

However, Hecht worked closely with Hitchcock, and the latter's influence still permeated the pages. Hitchcock called Hecht "an extraordinary screenwriter and an exceptional man" and explained their working relationship as a true collaboration, noting that "sometimes [Hecht] would become very lazy and would say, 'well, Hitch, write the dialogues you want. Then I'll correct them.' Ben was like a chess player."[65] In their first completed draft, much of the dialogue is indisputably Hitchcock's. An early scene with Dr. Edwards and Anstey, a schizophrenic patient, is a perfect example. Anstey believes his dog Nutsy is talking to him, and Edwards responds to Anstey by telling an anecdote about a drunk man who believes a horse is talking to him. Terrified, the drunk man confronts his friend, and the friend wittily replies, "Oh, I suppose he's been telling you about how he won the Kentucky derby. Don't believe a word of it. He's the damndest liar that ever lived." Witnessing this session, Dr. Murchison scolds Edwards for such an unorthodox approach to psychotherapy, and Edwards replies, "Nonsense. A good joke never hurt anybody. I'd like to be around when he tells it to Nutsy."[66] Again, Hitchcock was notorious for his jokes and often told stories with anecdotes. This scene disappears by the second draft. The mental hospital is no place for jokes, for nothing is funny about the issue of mental health.

[64] Selznick appointed his own therapist, May Romm, as script supervisor to insure an accurate representation of the practice. Leff 142.
[65] Gottlieb 122
[66] First Draft of *Spellbound,* Ben Hecht pg 5, 5/16/44, Selznick Collection, Box 511.

The question is, who or what is the victim of Hitchcock's jokes: the patient whose therapy ends with a punch line, the doctor who cannot crack a smile, or the practice itself? Leff views Hecht's draft as a way to direct "his mockery toward the Green Manors staff rather than (as MacPhail and Hitchcock had done) the Green Manors' patients. Throughout the first draft, Hecht cut the sober discourse of the psychiatrists with humor, irony, and cynicism."[67] This change in mockery and use of discourse is readily apparent in the new lunch scene. When Constance asks Edwards his opinion on small talk, Edwards replies, "My dear Dr. Sedgewick, I prefer it at all times. I've always been cured – or blessed – with an inability to think in public." The discussion turns to the new bathhouse under construction, and Dr. Fleurot insists, "Don't forget it was I who suggested towels."[68] Evidently, both statements are made in jest, but nobody laughs. This allows the audience to find them funny and laugh if they chose or to ignore the jest, responding in accordance with the other characters: the effect of dry British wit. Both of these lines were removed by the second draft. A bit of humor still remains in the lunch scene in the final script when Constance speaks of her mentor, Dr. Brulov, who "could never endure pockets in his clothes, […] had all his suits made without pockets – and used to carry his notes pinned to his lapel."[69] However, in this instance, the others laugh with her. The line is used to break the tension built up by Edwards's sudden outburst about not marking up tablecloths (our first indication he has a fear of dark lines on a white surface). It is self-consciously inserted and intended to make the audience laugh. Again, under the watchful eyes of Selznick, the tongue-in-cheek of the first draft is slowly replaced with dramatic suspense.

[67] Leff 128
[68] First Draft of *Spellbound,* Ben Hecht pg 10, 5/16/44, Selznick Collection, Box 511
[69] First Draft of *Spellbound,* Ben Hecht pg 11, 5/16/44, Selznick Collection, Box 511

Taking psychoanalysis seriously had as much to do with censorship as it did with Selznick's own personal feelings. In a letter from the United States government office of war information, William S. Cunningham told Selznick's story editor Margaret McDonell,

> We are interested in this story, however, because of the increasing significance of psychiatric treatment, particularly in relation to the problems of returning servicemen the world over. For this reason, we feel that it is important that the subject be treated on the screen with the same authenticity which has been observed in the scripting.[70]

WWII was taking its toll on the mental health of the country. It was not the time to start poking fun at crazy people or means of therapy. The Breen office created omissions of their own. In the earlier treatments, the film opens in the hospital and shows patients being administered different forms of therapy, including insulin shock. The production code explicitly forbade showing a needle puncturing through skin. The finished film avoided these issues by doing away with this introduction.[71]

Admittedly, moments of wit and humor still find their way into the final film, most notably through the character of Dr. Brulov. Now on the run from the law, Constance takes suspected murderer Edwards whose name is now J.B. to her trusted advisor for refuge and psychiatric advice. At first, they introduce themselves as newlyweds, and Brulov exclaims, "There is nothing so nice as a new marriage. No psychosis yet. No aggressions. No guilt complexes. Just two people who have agreed not to sublimate anymore." Though there is more than a little truth to this statement, Brulov means it in jest, and it comes off as such. It may not be as poignant as Edwards offering his patient a punch line and admitting to being a socialist, but it is still a moment of levity that also comments on psychoanalysis and its practical limitations. In this context, it is also an ironic statement as J.B. is exploding with psychosis, aggression, and

[70] Letter sent 8/8/44, Selznick Collection, Box 228.
[71] This change also had to do with audience polls that found this introduction tedious and grim. For further reading see Leff 163.

a guilt complex. Having found a temporary refuge at Brulov's, the couple let down their guard and lovingly embrace. However, Constance, ever the analyst, admits, "I'm well aware that we are all bundles of inhibitions […] and only a little ways removed from savagery."[72] Even a moment of sappy romance can procure reflexivity and dry humor. These moments of wit, brief as they are, reveal a slight change in Selznick and Hitchcock's working relationship. Over the years, Selznick had learned to trust the director, and while the final script had a much more serious tone than Hitchcock and his collaborators' early drafts, unlike *Rebecca,* Selznick allowed for humorous touches that made *Spellbound* readable as a Hitchcock picture.

In fact, Selznick did much more to ensure this film would be a Hitchcock vehicle than just tolerating bits of wit. He added a crucial element that future audience and critics alike would come to associate with the Hitchcock name: that of murder.[73] In both MacPhail's and Hecht's telling, J.B. finally remembers how the real Edwards died in a skiing accident by falling off the side of a cliff. J.B. watched it happen, fell into shock, and took over Edwards's identity to deal with his guilt. No one is to blame, and a conveniently placed camera is discovered at the scene that proves J.B.'s innocence. But this was not dramatic enough for Selznick. With a name like Hitchcock, why not heighten the suspense with a thrilling plot full of twists and turn? The final script follows the earlier ones up to that point, but when the authorities discover Edwards's body, they find a bullet wound. It becomes a murder case, and J.B. is taken away to await trial. In the film's end, Constance discovers the real murderer is Dr. Murchison, the head of the hospital who was supposed to have retired and been replaced by Edwards. Constance confronts Murchison in

[72] In the second draft, J.B. responds, "Darling, what do you think goes on a honeymoon – cannibalism?" A very funny line but removed by the Breen office for censorship purposes.

[73] Trying to reach out to the male audience, the Audience Research Institute informed Selznick, "We consistently find that selling Alfred Hitchcock and the mystery angle strongly will help the situation because these are the main factors that make men want to see the picture." Selznick needed both Hitchcock's name and his association with murder to ensure box office success. See letter from Jack Sayers to Selznick, 11/5/45, Selznick Collection, Box 229.

his office, and Murchison admits to the murder as he takes a gun out of his desk and points it at Constance. Calmly, she talks him out of committing a cold-blooded murder and slowly exits the office. Murchison then turns the gun on himself and fires. Hitchcock and Hecht were against this ending at first but soon gave in. However, Hitchcock admitted to Truffaut almost twenty years later, "The whole thing's too complicated, and I found the explanations toward the end very confusing."[74] But this statement could just be the result of Hitchcock's annoyance with Selznick's interference, for in many Hitchcock masterpieces to come, confusing and complicated plotlines never bothered him, most notably *North By Northwest*.

Conclusion

Ultimately, *Rebecca* offers the viewer no humor other than the kind associated with heightened melodrama and overly exaggerated emotional climaxes. One might release a chuckle when the girl commits faux pas in the new class order she has entered or when Maxim treats her as a child, but from my research, these moments were not intended to be funny. A few sitting in a packed theater will release a chuckle, but this effect is not widespread. Overall, the tonal range of the film is minimal. It begins on a dark suspenseful note as Maxim stands precariously close to the edge of a tall cliff begging the audience along with the girl to question if he will jump. The mood lightens for a brief interlude, though the troubled expression upon Maxim's face never completely wanes, and then the arrival at Manderley introduces the mysterious nature of Rebecca's death and the looming presence of Mrs. Danvers. There is no room for playful fun. No room for witticisms or tongue-in-cheek. Hitchcock must be credited with the film's success (and the Academy would agree by bestowing on him a nomination for Best Director). But his touch is noticeably absent. Despite his efforts to bestow levity which would have later increased

[74] Truffaut 167

the suspense by more affectively playing with the viewer's emotions, Selznick had the final say. The film is as far removed from the novel as it is from Hitchcock's creative preferences. It is a Selznick production: dry and humorless, but prestigious and literary.

Unintentional humor resulting from heightened melodrama carries over to *Spellbound*. The theremin, an electric instrument, exaggeratedly interrupts the violins every time JB looks crazily pained overtly calling attention to the emotional affect intended by the authors. However, moments of comedic release have also consciously been added. By *Spellbound*, Selznick had a better understanding of Hitchcock's worth both as a creative artist and more importantly as a marketable brand-name. Selznick provided Hitchcock with a story that moved beyond the strict confines of the woman's film, allowing him to have a bit more fun with the subject, and while Selznick still removed much of the humor from the first treatments and drafts in order to treat psychoanalysis seriously, he kept much of the witty interplay between the characters and gave Hitchcock room to experiment with form and style.

Under Selznick's watch, Hitchcock made the transition from Great Britain to America quite successfully. However, under Selznick, Hitchcock was forced to direct woman's pictures, a genre allowing for little humor, and to cede his creative freedom. In both *Rebecca* and *Spellbound*, Hitchcock found serious flaws and neither delivers the mix of humor with the macabre quintessential to the "Hitchcock Touch." This touch would take time to find its way to Hitchcock's American pictures, even after he left Selznick International. As he admitted to Truffaut,

> The question then is whether one should always have a sense of humor in dealing with a serious subject. It seems to me that some of my British films were too light and some of my American movies have been too heavy-handed, but it's the most difficult thing in the world to control that so as to get just the right dosage.[75]

[75] Truffaut 202

Chapter Two: Hitchcock and Cary Grant:

When Two Comedians Collude

Between 1941 and 1959, Hitchcock made four films with Cary Grant: *Suspicion* (1941), *Notorious* (1946), *To Catch a Thief* (1955), and *North by Northwest* (1959). Unlike his frustrated attempts to include humor while collaborating with Selznick, Hitchcock's dealings with Grant afforded Hitchcock not only the chance to include humor but to play with certain techniques and tones of humor found in the screwball comedy. Hitchcock's British films such as *The 39 Steps* (1935) and *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), while labeled suspense thrillers, are also set up as romantic comedies and can easily be read as comedies of manners. Boy meets girl. Girl snubs boy. The two find themselves in increasingly ridiculous situations, and in the end, boy gets girl. However, since his move to America, Hitchcock had not had much of a chance to showcase his screwball side, and his films grew much darker as they turned to genres such as the woman's film and gothic romances. The one exception emphasizing Hitchcock's pleasure in comedy is *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* (1941), which is a straightforward screwball about a husband and wife going through divorce and remarriage. However, this is not a typical Hitchcock picture as it offers no suspense. But with Grant by his side, the screwball was sure to emerge once more.

By the late '30s, Grant had developed a particular screen persona with the help of two prominent film directors, Howard Hawks and George Cukor. Hawks had given Grant his first taste of physical comedy in *Bringing up Baby* (1938) where Grant plays the role of Dr. David Huxley who soon finds himself rolling down hills, hanging onto the side of a moving car, and swinging from rafters when he falls prey to Susan Vance's (played by Katharine Hepburn) exploits. That very same year Cukor expanded upon Grant's physicality and cast him as Johnny

Case, a free spirited, self-made man who dreams of travelling the country with his rich and snooty fiancé, in the film *Holiday* (1938). Given Grant's charmingly good looks, he had the ability to appear ridiculously silly without losing all dignity. Thus, he represented the ultimate screwball protagonist. Duane Byrge and Robert Milton Miller find Grant's adaptability to screwball caused by his contradictory aspects with his good looks at one end and his comic figure at the other. "His characterizations were often marked by lapses in composure, self-confidence, personal resolve, and even civility or dexterity."[76] Andrew Britton calls Grant's screwballs "the comedy of male chastisement" as they are "full of scenes in which he is subjected to the most extreme discomfiture, humiliation, and loss of face by women."[77] Steven Cohan declares, "The performance style that produced 'Cary Grant' could be at once civilized and anarchic, subtle and broad, verbal and physical, elitist and popular, suggesting how his signature characteristics as a Hollywood star always implicitly ran the risk of putting him across that line which, for the American popular imagination of the 1950s in particular, polarized virility against effeminacy in an effort to authenticate a standardized version of masculinity."[78] These signature characteristics include "his characteristic voice, delivery, smile, timing, and double takes," and when they "all function together…are inseparable from his screen persona as the quintessential leading man of American romantic comedy."[79]

As his career took off, Grant became increasingly conscious of his persona and carefully chose roles that would showcase his ability to play the screwball lover. This often limited his acting range as his popularity became dictated by a persona with specific criteria. The audience carried certain expectations with them when going to see a Cary Grant picture, and ultimately,

[76] Byrge 7
[77] Britton 5
[78] Cohan 399
[79] Cohan 411

any film with Grant as the lead male would become a "Cary Grant picture." Thus, when Hitchcock began his collaboration with the star, he would have to concede a certain amount of his own authorial presence and find ways to negotiate each person's distinct persona to find the perfect balance.

Since Grant's persona, though suave and sophisticated, depended on comic mannerisms and ridiculous screwball situations, and Hitchcock's own touch also depended on varying techniques and degrees of humor, the collaboration was easy. Through Grant, Hitchcock found a male lead he could put into humiliating and often unsympathetic situations while still maintaining a high level of comedy and audience sympathy. Through Hitchcock, Grant found himself in challenging roles of characters who, while still embodying the screwball antihero traits, could delve into darker and more complex situations than his previous characters of the '30s had allowed. Each of their four films together did well at the box office and found critical acclaim among both scholars and critics alike. And in each film, Hitchcock was able to develop the character more fully until he was finally able to utilize the whole of the Grant persona. Ultimately, this persona has two parts: the ideal romantic lover and the screwball comedian. Grant's good looks and charming debonair smile made the former component easy to access, but since moving to America, Hitchcock had not needed a male lead to provide zany or wacky comedy as his focus had been on suspenseful woman films. Thus, the comedic component of Grant's persona did not have a chance to thrive until the two's later films.

I take the first three films chronologically and apply textual analysis to show how each consecutive film takes Grant's screwball persona one step further, revealing a learning curve in which Hitchcock becomes more comfortable letting Grant act silly and in which Grant becomes more confident making each character his own. This evolutionary process was in part forced on

Hitchcock by the intertextuality inherent in Grant's persona. With each stereotypical romantic screwball role Grant played, it became harder to separate Cary Grant the actor with Cary Grant's character. Thus, when Hitchcock attempted to play against the stereotype and turn him into a man suspected of murderous intentions in *Suspicion,* he found resistance with studio heads and critics alike. Hitchcock took a more mainstream approach in their next collaboration and let Grant play the romantic lead audiences could more readily accept in *Notorious*. However, it was not until *To Catch a Thief* that Hitchcock directed Grant in a role that both played with (and not against) his stereotype and finally let his comedic side emerge.

Their relationship culminates in what I call the quintessential Hitchcock masterpiece in its ability to employ reflexively Hitchcock's touch while also allowing Grant's screwball persona to manifest fully. In my analysis of *North by Northwest*, I introduce a third collaborator, the screenwriter Ernest Lehman, whose witty script and close attention to detail contributes to the film's success. To assign authorship to the humor included in this film, I first locate the humorous moments and then use an array of methodological approaches including textual analysis, production studies, and archival research. The Ernest Lehman Collection at the Harry Ransom Center has provided me with ample production notes and drafts of screenplays to help validate my argument. I also look at interviews by both Lehman and Hitchcock to locate possible origins of humor.

Suspicion

Playing the part of socialite Johnnie Aysgarth, Grant makes his entrance into *Suspicion* by clumsily bumping against the leg of the film's protagonist Lina McLaidlaw (Joan Fontaine) as the train they are aboard goes through a dark tunnel. Johnnie exclaims, "Oh I beg your pardon, is that your leg? I had no idea we were going into a tunnel. I thought the compartment was empty." This opening establishes the screwball tradition of boy meets girl in an embarrassing situation. Lina expresses little interest in this clumsy man, and her opinion of him fails to improve when Johnnie asks her for train fare as he has come up short. Yet, in typical Hitchcockian fashion, the man is more than he seems, and Lina soon comes across a picture of him in a newspaper. Intrigued, she gives the man a second look-over, but Johnnie has nothing but annoyance on his face as he stares out the window still nursing a hangover from the night before. Up to this point, the lighthearted music, the ridiculous coincidental meeting of silly mannered boy, who the well-versed viewer knows to be the charming Grant, meets reserved and perhaps affluent girl, and the quick shot/ reverse shot cuts typical of classical Hollywood cinema momentarily deceive the viewers into thinking that they have entered into a typical romantic comedy. But, after all, this is still a picture labeled "suspicion" and one with Hitchcock's name attached, so the hypothesis is met with a wary view.

2.1

2.2


2.3

Their second meeting continues in this comedic vain. Shortly after this introduction, Johnnie calls upon Lina at her house where she still lives with her parents. He wins her over with tongue-in-cheek repartee, telling her that her hair is all wrong but has so much potential.

2.4

2.5

"You don't look very good like that; you look like a bit of a monkey with a mirror. What does your family call you, monkey face?" Though Lina seems initially put off with his manner, at the end of their outing, she spontaneously kisses him and runs away. Naturally, marriage follows. However, instead of fading out and rolling credits as the typical screwball ends, the film takes the viewers further and explores the problematic nature of this marriage. Lina soon discovers Johnnie has a gambling addiction and owes money all over town. When their money runs out and Lina finds that she is cut out of her family's inheritance, Johnnie's actions become mysterious as he obsesses over murder mysteries.

Suspicion and suspense completely take over Lina when Johnnie questions a doctor about an untraceable poison at a dinner party. The doctor declines to discuss it, and Johnnie pleads, "Oh now come, do I look like a murderer?" Izzy, a woman who can always spot a murderer, says of Johnnie, "Oh, look at the expression on his face; trying to look mysterious, are you? But you can't fool me. You couldn't commit a murder if you tried for a hundred years." (See Fig 2.6) Johnnie smiles and responds, "No, I don't believe I could." The eerie music and quick cut

to Lina looking faint likely plants a seed of distrust in the viewers, but with that charming face, and sincere smile, this distrust becomes more uncomfortable confusion.

2.6

2.7

In the end, Johnnie is not a murderer. As he explains, his interest in poison was for taking his own life as he felt he was a failure as a husband and thought his wife would be better off without him. Lina intervenes in the nick of time, talks him out of suicide, and the two happily drive off together.

This was not the ending of the original novel *Before the Fact* nor was it the ending Hitchcock claimed he wanted to make. The novel follows the story of a young woman who discovers her husband is trying to murder her and allows herself to be killed as she so desperately loves her husband. Originally, Hitchcock intended to follow this story line and had planned a scene where Johnnie brings Lina a glass of poisoned milk. Lina has just written a letter to her mother saying, "Dear Mother, I'm desperately in love with him, but I don't want to live because he's a killer. Though I'd rather die, I think society should be protected from him."[80] Lina then gives the letter to Johnnie and drinks the milk. The last shot would show Johnnie cheerfully mailing the letter.[81] But Hitchcock explained, "That was heresy, to do that to Cary

[80] Truffaut 142
[81] Ibid.

Grant in those days."[82] Ultimately, it fell to the studio to refuse to permit Grant to play the role of a murderer. Critics of the film have often pointed to Grant as miscast in this role to which Hitchcock replied, "The values are his glamour, his good looks, his box office. Once you decide to go after Cary Grant, the question of suitability takes second place to the question of availability."[83]

However, the film did remarkably well at the box office and received the Academy Award for Best Actress in a Lead Role due to Fontaine's exquisite performance as the meek and befuddled wife as well as nominations for both Best Music and Best Picture. Grant's comedic abilities provided levity and humor in the film's first act. But after the film creates questions about his intent, the humorous moments vanish. Hitchcock is a master at switching from a tone of levity to one of suspense and suspicion, and the audience expects Hitchcock to play with their emotions, but no one wants to see their screwball hero become a suspected murderer.

Notorious

Hitchcock makes amends with the critics who complained of the miscasting of Grant in *Suspicion* with his second Grant film, *Notorious.* Here, Grant plays T.R. Devlin, a government agent who enlists the help of Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman) to spy on Nazis living in Rio de Janeiro. Like *Suspicion*, the first thirty minutes of this film set up what could be a romantic comedy. Alicia first sets eyes on Devlin when he crashes her party. He is a staid man of few words, merely observing the revelry while sitting in a dark corner, but Alicia, in her drunken state, takes a liking to him, and soon the two are speeding down a windy highway, Alicia behind the wheel. Her reckless speed attracts the attention of a highway patrol man, but when he pulls

[82] Gottleib 92
[83] Gottlieb 179 in interview with Arthur Knight in 1973

her over, Devlin flashes an identification card, and the cop lets them go. His identity as a government agent now comes out, and he solicits Alicia's help. She concedes, and the two travel to Brazil together and fall in love. Again, girl meets boy, boy is not what he initially seems, and the two fall in love. Moreover, like in *Suspicion*, this is only the first act. The tone soon changes. Alicia discovers her assignment involves seducing Alexander Sebastian (Claude Raines), and she takes up her role too well. Devlin's jealousy gets the best of him. The two become conflicted. In the end, Devlin realizes he has misjudged Alicia's intentions and rescues her from Alex and his mother, who have both begun poisoning Alicia after discovering she is an American spy.

It is essential to the viewers' sympathies that Devlin be played by a recognizable and likable actor since after the initial setup, his character has limited screen time, and much of that time involves him acting as an unreasonable rapscallion. Grant's cool manner, appealing physique, and photogenic face make him the ideal love interest, but his profession and particular mission of turning Alicia into something less than a virtuous lady make it impossible for Grant to show his silly, screwball side.

His whole part is dependent upon his facial expressions since he has very little action, and his dialogue is mostly callous and cruel as it is directed at the woman he is convinced broke his heart. However, he does reveal a lighter and vulnerable side, through his eyes that constantly flutter left to right, up and down. These eye movements signify thoughts and emotions unexpressed. While his body remains composed, his determined, piercing look, interrupted with shifts, signify he is putting on an act.

The motif of smoking is another important substitute for Devlin's emotional response. Every time he lights a cigarette, it is a cue he is avoiding his feelings. Instead of dialogue telling

us he in uncomfortable and agitated, he shows us. Thus, smoking is a way for him to both hide and reveal his emotions at the same time as it provides an excuse for him not to talk things out as well as creating a reoccurring motif associated with emotional distress.

François Truffaut called *Notorious* his favorite of Hitchcock's films. Its camera work, subjective point of view, and use of suspense create a film full of emotional affect that points candidly to Hitchcock's handiwork. However, if one element makes this an imperfect Hitchcock picture, it is the film's lack of humor.[84] Britton even goes so far as to say, "In order to transform Grant, in *Notorious*, into the most detestable leading man in the American popular cinema, Hitchcock has entirely to subdue the comedian."[85] While no one has complained of Grant being miscast in *Notorious* as he is always convincing as a romantic lead, it is not a film that can make use of his full acting potential.

To Catch a Thief

In *To Catch a Thief*, Grant plays the part of John Robie, a retired burglar nicknamed "The Cat." When a new cat burglar begins imitating Robie's old ways, Robie decides to track down the new thief in order to clear his name. Along the way, he makes the acquaintance of Frances Stevens (Grace Kelly), daughter of a wealthy woman, soon to become the victim of the jewel thief, and romance flourishes. The film is pure entertainment. Murder plays a part -- it is a Hitchcock film after all -- but the overall lighthearted mood of the film gives Grant a chance to break into a smile. He is still cunning, suave, and debonair -- he is Cary Grant after all -- but he is now a man on the run who at times finds himself in absurd situations harking back to the screwball tradition of Grant's past. In this way, the film calls attention to the intertextuality of

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[85] Britton 14

the Grant persona. By default, the character of Robie will exhibit characteristics of the Grant persona that developed in the romantic comedies of the '30s.

Grant enters into his first absurd situation less than thirty minutes into the film. After escaping the police who highly suspect him of the recent robberies, Grant boards a bus and finds himself seated next to a lady with a cage of chirping canaries. Grant looks almost into the camera with a 'that figures' look. The camera then pans over as Grant looks to the man sitting on his left. It is Alfred Hitchcock making his signature cameo appearance. The reflexivity is readily apparent. Grant almost gives Hitchcock an accusatory look as if implying, "Don't you know who I am? How could you cram me into the back of a bus with a crazy bird lady?"

2.8

2.9

Soon after this incident, Robie finds himself being followed by two men. A chase ensues that ends with Robie hiding in a bundle of flowers, only to be caught and hit over the head multiple times by the flower shop owner, a thin, old woman. Along with the absurdity of the situation is a hint of emasculation so common to his screwball persona.

2.10

2.11

Other instances of emasculation occur when Grant must take cover from a government plane in fig 2.12 and when the camera frames him between the legs of a man delivering him a letter on the beach in fig 2.13.

2.12

2.13

These images are hilarious in their own right, but even more so when we consider the Grant persona, one constantly humiliated by the women around him. Cinema is intertextual. Hitchcock is aware of this and consciously invokes reflexivity as both a means of adding a fun game for the audience in the know and a way of marketing himself and his films to that audience. Knowing Grant's persona is almost essential to understanding his character, which is never far removed from that persona. We know who Grant is, and Grant knows we know this. The same is true of Hitchcock.

When Frances finally reveals that she knows Robie's real identity as the former cat burglar, she admits, "You are like an American character in an English movie. You just don't talk the way an American tourist ought to talk. … You're just not American enough to carry it off." More than to Robie, she seems to be making a direct reference to Grant's performance.

At the end of *To Catch a Thief*, Robie admits to Frances that he needs her, and the two embrace. Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, girl runs back to boy who agrees to take her back. While Hitchcock called this "a lightweight story" that "wasn't supposed to be taken seriously,"

the film plays an important part in Hitchcock and Grant's evolving relationship.[86] For the first time, Hitchcock makes use of Grant's physical dexterity and agility. He also begins to explore the intertextual potentials in the Grant persona. However, much is still missing. Grant's comedic ability remains underutilized. Hitchcock would find the right dosage in his next and last picture with Grant with the help of screenwriter Ernest Lehman.

North by Northwest

In *North by Northwest*, Grant plays Roger Thornhill, an ad executive who is accidentally mistaken as government agent, George Kaplan. Roger finds himself on the run, being pursued by foreign spies who are out to steal government secrets when he makes the acquaintance of Eve Kendall (Eva Marie Saint), and the two set out to find the real Kaplan, a journey that famously ends on top of Mount Rushmore. Of the four Grant-Hitchcock films, *North by Northwest* is the funniest. It makes the most use of Grant's physical comedic abilities, constantly putting him in ridiculous and absurd situations, and provides heavy doses of verbal humor. While Hitchcock's dry wit often manifested itself in word play, often with puns and funny anecdotes to which his multiple interviews can readily attest, the verbal humor found in *North by Northwest* owes most of its existence to the screenwriter Ernest Lehman.

Hitchcock and Lehman first met to discuss the adaptation of *The Wreck of the Mary Deare* by Hammond Innis for MGM. However, this project was soon abandoned when Lehman admitted he did not think the screenplay would work.[87] This did not seem to concern Hitchcock who suggested they scrap the project entirely and start work on an original screenplay. Hitchcock told Lehman he had always wanted to shoot a chase scene across the faces on Mount

[86] Truffaut 224
[87] Ernest Lehman Film Collection (ELF) Box 232.007.

Rushmore. With this germ of an idea planted, the two spent the next several weeks meeting and brainstorming on ways to make this scene find its way into a feature film. Lehman took diligent notes during these brainstorming sessions (which the Harry Ransom Center's film archive collection houses). The notes provide valuable insight into the nature of their collaboration at this initial stage of preproduction and illuminate when and from where the funny moments of *North by Northwest* hail.

Long before they developed characters or worked out a comprehensive story line, the two discussed cinematic scenarios and various locations across the US. Lehman later recalled, "I remember all those things about moving in a northwesterly direction. We'd wind up at Lake Louise, and then go on to Alaska. But why are we moving in a northwesterly direction, and who is?"[88] The nature of the protagonist was also hashed out in these first weeks. Lehman made the following notes: "If only this could be the kind of adventure that could happen to any American guy – or girl." "There is no help for Roger, nobody he can turn to. This must be laid in at all times. Police and agents are against him. Government agencies would turn their backs on him. Newspapers probably carry stories of FBI manhunt for Roger."[89] While these questions are posed in Lehman's handwriting, the idea of a protagonist mistaken for another man (the 'wrong man' plot) and with no one to turn to is a common Hitchcock motif. He had used this scenario time and again, most notably in the films *The 39 Steps* (1935), *Saboteur* (1942), and *The Wrong Man* (1956).

How and where to insert humor does not seem to have been a focus during their initial brainstorming meetings. Lehman's notes mainly discuss the importance of mounting suspense as the protagonist moves from point A to point B, and much time is devoted to working out the

[88] Ernest Lehman interview, May 27, 1975.
[89] "Notes on story conference between Lehman and Hitchcock, August 15, 1957", ELF.

details of specific scenes including the kidnapping, the drunk driving, and the murder at the United Nations, all of which make it into the final film. However, despite its absence from these notes and outlines, the collaborators must have known humor would be inserted in the final film. Lehman had admitted, "I wanted to write a definitive Hitchcock film – the Hitchcock film to end all Hitchcock films,"[90] and along with suspense, humor was a crucial component of definitive Hitchcock. When Hitchcock finally told MGM they had abandoned *The Wreck of the Mary Deare* to work on an original screenplay, weeks into their meetings, Hitchcock described their project as an American version of *The 39 Steps*, a film which relies heavily on physical screwball situations and can easily be read as a comedy of manners.[91]

With weeks of brainstorming notes and two partial outlines completed, Hitchcock went to work on *Vertigo*, leaving Lehman to his own devices. Without a clear idea of where the film was heading or how it was going to arrive there, Lehman took a road trip across New York state, Chicago, and Mount Rushmore to find inspiration. After this, he returned to Los Angeles and began writing. He recalled, "There I am sitting all by myself at MGM not knowing what the next scene is or why the characters are even doing what they're doing. I was really making it up as I went along. It was just too much for me."[92] In Jethro Michael Sims's dissertation, "Ernest Lehman, Alfred Hitchcock, North by Northwest : A Case Study of Narrative Elaboration in Hollywood Filmmaking" (1990), Sims argues that Hitchcock and Lehman's outline was much sparser than a standard film treatment which **"**indicates how little Lehman had to work with during the scripting process."[93] However, Lehman had more at his disposal than the outlines indicate. As he intended to write the quintessential Hitchcock picture, he relied heavily on

[90] John Brady 1982 interview with Lehman, ELF 219.002
[91] ELF Box 232.007
[92] Ernest Lehman Interview, May 27, 1975, ELF 210.002
[93] Sims 165

Hitchcockian themes and motifs, by this time firmly established in the director's vast oeuvre. When he began work on the screenplays, Lehman had another star around which to tailor the film as well, for the film would also need to become a quintessential Grant vehicle. Thus, it is no accident that Grant's physical comedy is situated at the forefront of the film's action. To understand better which party was responsible for what humor, I will take a look at multiple scenes that heavily rely on humor and cross-examine their appearance in the final film with production notes, the final screenplay, and the multiple interviews and reviews at my disposal.

Introduction and Kidnap

The film opens on Madison Avenue where our protagonist Roger Thornhill dictates to his secretary as he walks down the street and enters a taxi. None of his speech has any consequence concerning the plot, but it helps to firmly establish Roger as an adman with scrupulous morals and a propensity for liquor and women, as he tells his secretary to leave some woman the note, "Something for your sweet tooth, baby, and all your other sweet parts," and to remind his mother of theater tickets with an aside, "I'll have had two martinis at the Oak Bar, so she needn't bother to sniff my breath." In typical Hitchcock fashion, the film presents a protagonist who, though soon to become a victim of circumstance, is less than sympathetic. But it is still Grant, and, whatever his shortcomings, the viewers will still root for him. Lehman also makes this pompous character's introduction bearable by providing humorous dialogue. A good example of this occurs in the taxi when, amidst dictating directions to his secretary, Roger suddenly takes an interest in his appearance. He asks his secretary, "Do I look a little heavyish to you?" She replies, "What?" Roger continues, "I <u>feel</u> heavyish. Put a note on my desk in the morning. 'Think thin.'"

The viewers have just enough time to release a giggle at Roger's self-centered quips before the plot suddenly thickens, and our hero finds himself the victim of mistaken identity at the hands of foreign spies. Roger has arrived at a hotel for a business meeting and steps out to place a call to his mother (a grown man placing a call to his mother during a business meeting is comedy enough). At that moment, two men seize him and drag him outside to their car at gunpoint. Bernard Herrmann's score picks up, and the viewers experience their first taste of suspense. However, even in this confusing and possibly dire situation, Lehman's script remains relentlessly witty as this excerpt from the shooting script reveals.

> As the car moves east, Thornhill glances at the stony-faced men on either side of him. He is anxious, but does not want to show it.
>
> THORNHILL: Don't tell me where we're going. Surprise me. Y'know, I left some people waiting for me back there in the Oak Bar, and they're going to think I'm awfully rude, going off like this. (he waits – no response) I mean, if you could let me off at a drugstore for a moment, I could call them and explain that I'm… (he glances at the men inquiringly) …being…kidnapped? (no response) that is what's happening, isn't it?[94]

Drunk Driving

After the spies kidnap Roger, they pour a bottle of bourbon down his throat and set him off in a car at the edge of a cliff. However, the spies have underestimated Roger's alcohol tolerance (the opening dialogue now has further motivation), and he takes control of the wheel the best he can and races down the windy road trying to escape the spies now on his tail. While nothing is inherently funny about forcing a man to drink a bottle of bourbon and then plummet to his death, and while the chase involves Roger with many near misses of crashing into oncoming traffic which heightens suspense, Grant's facial expressions and the dialogue still allow for much comic relief. As the chase ensues, the film provides many cuts to close ups of Roger's face

[94] Lehman, Final Shooting Script, pg12, ELF232.009

where his eyes oscillate between exaggerated squints and wide ogling stares. He looks like a drunken madman, strangely determined. Lehman provided detailed directions in the final shooting script concerning how this scene was to play out.

> Naturally, we film this ride, and that which follows, from many different angles, including Thornhill's delirious double-vision point of view.[95]
>
> Thornhill tries desperately to keep his eyes in focus, his foot on the floorboard and his hands on the wheel. HORNS BLARE warningly as he comes perilously close to several head-on crashes. In his rear-view mirror, he sees the headlights of the police car following and does not realize that it is no longer the limousine. The headlights are coming closer. Suddenly, almost too late, he sees ahead of him an elderly gentleman on a bicycle emerge from a side road. He slams on the brakes and the car comes to a screaming wobbling stop. [96]

Lehman's script calls for the camera angles that give Grant the chance to play physically with his expressions, but Lehman could not write how exaggerated and comical these expressions become. Grant earns the credit for coming up with these faces on his own. By this point in his screwball career he had had plenty of experience with using quirky expressions for a laugh. But another film collaborator must also be considered, the film editor George Tomasini. His cuts give Grant enough time in close up to react to his situation as well as the audience enough time to react to Grant before switching to suspenseful point of view shots.

As I mentioned above, details of the car chase sequence had been worked over in Hitchcock and Lehman's initial brainstorming sessions. So while Lehman is responsible for transcribing the scenario to paper, Hitchcock had contributed to the initial inspiration. Car chases are a common Hitchcock motif. In fact, Grant finds himself in a speeding car in all four of his Hitchcock films with varying degrees of hilarity. Susan Smith believes, "There is a certain feminist pleasure to be derived from this joke given the way that the later (more comic) instances

[95] Lehman, Final Shooting Script, pg23, ELF232.009
[96] Lehman, Final Shooting Script, pg24, ELF232.009

in the sequence enact a form of revenge upon the earlier Grant persona by increasingly placing him in the position formerly occupied by the Joan Fontaine and Ingrid Bergman characters. In effect, then, the Grant character is subjected to an extended comic process of 'feminisation' that retrospectively encloses and redefines his earlier performances within a wider, ironic perceptual framework."[97] Whether Lehman intended it to feminize Grant or not, he admitted the scene was supposed to earn a laugh. Though he complained, "I always felt it was overdone. I felt this sequence was a little too long. It tends to make Cary look a little bit foolish." [98] But how would the scene get a laugh without making Grant look foolish?

Jail Scene

The chase ends in true slapstick fashion as the police vehicle comes crashing into the back of Roger's car after he suddenly breaks for the bicycle. Roger is whisked away to jail, and the tension and suspense of the chase is replaced with light banter. Again, the humor in this scene is a combination of Grant's superb comedic timing and physical abilities with Lehman's funny dialogue. Slurring his words and unable to remain standing, Roger succumbs to lying on a bench while exclaiming, "Don't wanna sit. Perfectly all right. We'll throw the book at 'em. Kidnapping. Assault with gun…and bourbon…and sports car. We'll get 'em." Shortly after, he tells an officer of the law, "Don't wanna cell. I want a policeman."[99]

Lehman worked out the details for this scene while on his research road trip. In order to portray accurately and realistically an arrest for drunk driving, Lehman had officers put him through the exact procedures they would use in a real scenario. "I learned the tests he would give me, and whether they would allow me a telephone call, and what words they would use as

[97] Smith 72
[98] Ernest Lehman DVD commentary, released by MGM in 2004
[99] Lehman Final Shooting Script, pg 26, ELF232.009

they bring you into the station house."[100] Putting realistic touches on Roger's nightmarish abduction and implausible escape somewhat confuses the viewer's sense of the diegesis, slightly elevating the danger of the situation and making them yearn for the release of laughter when it finally comes.

Elevator

After a comical courtroom scene in which Roger's drunken antics are repeated in the presence of his mother, the next scene that invokes humor takes place in a hotel elevator. Roger and his mother have gone to the hotel in search of the real Kaplan only to discover no member of the hotel staff has ever seen the man in person. The foreign spies have followed them, and, as Roger and his mother attempt to leave the hotel, they enter an elevator already occupied by the spies. Roger gets the attention of his mother and silently indicates the predicament. After a tense moment, his mother turns to the men and asks point blankly, "You gentlemen aren't really trying to kill my son, are you?" Up to this question, the music has been building up, in volume, in pitch, in speed, and the suspense climbs with it. Right when his mother asks question, the music abruptly stops, and an awkward silence follows. Roger turns from his mother and looks right into the camera, breaking the fourth wall. He has no one left to turn to. His expression is one of dumfounded disbelief and annoyance at his mother who finds his story discreditable. The silence is broken by diegetic laugher.[101] The camera moves from medium shot to close up, and the two villains burst out in fits of giggles. The other people in the elevator join in, and, soon,

[100] John Brady interview with Lehman, ELF 219.002.
[101] Allen explains that having other characters laugh in this scene "creates a self-conscious hiatus in the suspense that at once draws our attention to the seriousness of his situation and also makes fun of it. If we can freely embrace the light-hearted tone of this laughter, it is because we ourselves never really believe that Thornhill is seriously in danger of his life." (Allen 60)

even his mother joins in the laughter. But Roger will have no part of this farce. In his close up, he remains obstinately unamused, with squinted eyes, and a stern countenance. As soon as the elevator doors open, he makes a run for it. The music picks up, and the suspense heightens as the chase ensues. However, Lehman's script provides one more dose of comedy as the mother calls out to her fleeing son, "Roger! Will you be home for dinner?" The initial plot use of his mother works later to emphasize his utter isolation as the man on the run, but it also serves as a gag played for laughs. Moreover, it creates a plot question. Will Roger ever grow up?

Again, while Lehman's screenplay provides minute details for this scene down to the exact number of passengers, their ages, and their "obvious refinement and sophistication," what makes the elevator scene work so effectively and comically, is the scene's pace, types of shots, and Grant's demeanor and befuddled performance.

United Nations and Government Agents

Roger leaves the hotel and goes straight to the United Nations building to see Mr. Townsend. As soon as they meet, a spy appears from behind a corner and throws a knife into Townsend's back. The spy runs away and leaves Roger alone with the body. He pulls the knife out of Townsend's back, and onlookers gasp, mistaking him as the murderer. Roger flees the scene but not before being photographed with the bloody knife in hand. The film cuts to a close-up point of view shot of Roger's photograph on the front page of the paper, *The Evening Star* no less.

2.14

The photo positions Roger at the center of the frame, with his shoulders angled inward in a way as to suggest this pose has been staged. He is grasping a knife with the blade pointed down and slightly angled towards his body, further exaggerating the pose. Once more, Grant's facial expressions provide the comedy. His brow is furrowed, his mouth is clenched tight, and his eyes are wide and wild to a degree of parody of the killer caught red-handed. The technique of exaggeration provides one level of humor, but what takes this to a higher level of guffaw is the viewers' familiarity with Grant's suave, leading lady's man persona. This newspaper clipping presents an image of Grant that goes completely against his romantic persona. That Hollywood's leading man would be mistaken for a dangerous killer is absurd. While Hitchcock's fixation with the wrong-man formula calls for Roger's mistaken identity, and while the idea of Roger's picture circulating in the newspapers had been thought up in the initial brainstorming sessions, eventually finding its way into Lehman's final script, the comic nature of this photo comes directly from Grant's physical demeanor and working both with and against his persona.

The camera reveals the man holding the paper is in a large but undistinguishable office, sitting at a conference table with others around him. At this early moment in the film,

Hitchcock now chooses to disrupt the fast and frantic pace of the chase with a scene of exposition. Here, the viewers learn the true nature of Kaplan. He does not exist and is simply an invention of the government agents to distract the foreign spies from discovering the true undercover agent right under their noses. The group discusses Roger's fate in a rather casual manner and decides they can do nothing to help this innocent man. If they intervened, they would endanger the life of their own agent so Roger must face his fate alone.

Initially, Lehman argued placing this scene so early in the film revealed too much too soon. However, Hitchcock adamantly insisted and used one of his famous anecdotes to explain how suspense builds when the audience knows more than the protagonist. He called it the bomb under the seat scenario. The audience sees it there and nervously anticipates it may go off. With this information, the viewers know of Roger's complete isolation and predicament. He travels not only without a mother but without any hope of government aid. The stakes are raised, and the question develops, who is the government agent? Again, though having disagreed about its use, Lehman wrote the scene in scrupulous details as the following excerpt shows.

> The man puts the newspaper down on the table, looks up at the other people. Their ages vary from thirty-five to fifty; there is nothing about the Intelligence agent's appearance that distinguishes him from, say, a college professor or a stock broker or a reporter or a housewife. These people happen to be all of that, too. The gentleman who has been reading the newspaper, for example, is, among other things, a limner of comic cartoons for the national magazines.[102]

Other than the professor, the professions of these people do not manifest in the final film, but that they are supposed to represent normal people who just happen to work for the government in charge of secret agents shows Lehman relying on another Hitchcock motif: average people in extraordinary circumstances. Along with their undistinguishable appearances, the group's conversation is completely devoid of urgency. They are discussing a man's life and

[102] Lehman Final Shooting Script, 59, ELF232.009

the possible leak of secret government information to government spies, but the nonchalant tone and subdued air of the meeting give the impression they could easily be discussing what they will be having for dinner. The scene's slow, relaxed pace relies on understatement, typical of Hitchcock, for its humorous effect and gives the viewers a chance to breathe as they release a chuckle. Even a government agent sitting around the table admits, "So horribly sad, how come I feel like laughing?"

James Naremore sees this scene as a comic satire and acknowledges, "One might say that the audience takes pleasure in a deliberately 'inappropriate' laughter that exposes the solemnity and sentiment of the ordinary murder story."[103] The viewers are certainly able to laugh at the conventions of the wrong-man story, but even more so, they are laughing at Grant's ridiculous misfortune. More than just taking pleasure in the inappropriate laughter, they are taking pleasure in the leading man reverting to his comedy of humiliation persona. Imagining that anyone could mistake Grant for a murderer is absurd and can't be taken seriously.[104]

Despite his now easily recognizable face, Roger makes his escape onto a train where he first meets Eve Kendall, the film's love interest. This scene relies heavily on wordplay provided by Lehman. However, the dialogue's purpose is to introduce sexual tension and romance into the story more than to provide humor. Lines such as, "I never discuss love on an empty stomach" and "it's going to be a long night…and I don't particularly like the book I've started" provide plenty of innuendos that give this film an adult tone. These lines seemed racy at the time, but the dialogue is too obvious and does little to showcase the sophisticated wit of Lehman or Hitchcock.

[103] Naremore 16
[104] I would apply this same rational to analyzing the humor in *Charade* (1963).

Crop Dusting

No early notes or outlines exist in the Ernest Lehman collection concerning the crop dusting scene. When asked years later who came up with this most famous sequence in the final film, Lehman admitted he could not entirely remember its origins but that Hitchcock had suggested an attack from the sky. Initially, Hitchcock envisioned a cyclone falling down on Roger, but Lehman stepped in and pointed out the implausibility involved with the villains controlling a cyclone attack.[105] Lehman also remembers Hitchcock telling him about always wanting to do a 360-degree pan where nothing is in the distance. Eventually, the crop duster made its way to the final shooting script, where Lehman once more provided a detailed account. Every movement of both Roger and the plane comes from the script as the following excerpt shows.

> SHOOTING ACROSS THE HIGHWAY, we SEE Thornhill running and stumbling TOWARDS CAMERA, the plane closing in behind him, and the Diesel tanker approaching from the left. He dashes out into the middle of the highway and waves his arms wildly.[106]

In this scene, there is limited variation in the *mise-en-scène of the cornfield*, no music for an extended amount of time, and no dialogue. Thus, the film relies heavily on the physical performance of its protagonist to keep the viewers engaged and concerned with his predicament. Grant plays the part of a bewildered and beleaguered New Yorker perfectly, allowing viewers to align with his point of view. His indisputable good looks may help to accomplish this. As Robin Wood notes:

> If the character were not attractive, for all his shortcomings, our response would be merely sadistic, we would delight in the spectacle of an unpleasant man getting his

[105] Sims 183
[106] Lehman, Final Shooting Script, pg 99, ELF232.009.

deserts; but we have become sufficiently identified with him for our suspense to be characterized by a tension between conflicting reactions to his predicament. [107]

However, the scene does cause some delight. For the first time in a Hitchcock film, we see Grant fall face first to the ground, an act for which his vaudeville background had prepared him. Figs. 2.15 and 2.16 show that even when he falls, Grant is readily aware of his body's posture and uses exaggeration by lifting a leg or posing like a cat to play with our image of him as a poised, refined character put in an absurd situation.

2.15

2.16

Playing with Grant's identity

The film consciously and consistently uses and plays with Grant's established film persona. In a later scene, Grant must fall again when Eve shoots him with blanks. However, this time, it is all an act. When they meet afterward, Eve admits, "You did it rather well I thought." Grant responds, "Yes, I thought I was quite graceful." Eve continues, "Considering it's not really your kind of work." The double entendre inherent in this statement allows the informed viewer to break with the diegesis and laugh. In all ways considered, this is exactly Grant's kind of work. Whether commenting on his acting ability, his graceful falling, or his competency in spy work, Grant has perfected each.

[107] Wood 82

Stanley Cavell marks out two essential reasons for needing Grant in this role:

> First, to redeem him from certain guilts acquired in those earlier environments, especially in allowing him to overcome the situation of *Notorious*, as if film actors and their characters get stuck to one another, and as if he is being readied for something purer in this context; and second, to inscribe the subject of film acting, and acting generally, as a main topic of this film, which is to say, a main branch of its investigation of the nature of film.[108]

While Cavell is unjustly harsh on *Notorious*, pointing out the reflexivity of this film and stating that Grant is inseparable from his characters is both valid and essential to understanding how Hitchcock uses him in the film.

Things and Bits

Chapter one explored the humorous 'things and bits' that Leonard Leff saw as a crucial part of Hitchcock's definitive signature trait. If Lehman set out to make a definitive Hitchcock film, one should expect to see the same 'things and bits' pop up. Though the film does not rely as heavily on inanimate objects as, say, *Notorious*, the few that appear have been intentionally placed there by Hitchcock himself for humorous effect. My favorite involves a comically small razor Roger finds in Eve's washroom on the train and later uses in the train station washroom. Hitchcock had imagined a comic scene with this razor in the first weeks of brainstorming with Lehman. In fact, it was one of the very few instances in these meetings when any humor was discussed, as the authors' biggest concern remained suspenseful and cinematic moments. Lehman wrote out the scene in this fashion:

> Thornhill nonchalantly finishes his lathering, then looks down and picks up his razor, which, up to now, we have not seen. It is the tiny one belonging to Eve. He starts to draw it down his cheek, leaving the narrowest of lines down the lather. Then in the

[108] Cavell 763

mirror he catches sight of the man with the straight razor staring at him in bewilderment.[109]

The script definitely calls for humor, but again, it is Grant's acting that makes it work. When Roger catches the suspicious eye of the other man, he returns the same stare without missing a beat. Roger looks him slowly up and down, his brow furrowed in a comically exaggerated grimace as though to suggest something is unsettling about the normal size of the other man's razor. The man looks away, not able to compete with Grant's expression. So we have Hitchcock coming up with a random object to provide humor, Lehman finding a way to fit it into the plot, and Grant fulfilling the comedy's potential. Why a woman would have a razor that tiny is another plot point that must give us pause.

Mount Rushmore

The final scene to consider is the last sequence on Mount Rushmore. Using the Presidents' faces as another way to introduce tongue-in-cheek commentary, Hitchcock admitted, "I wanted Cary Grant to slide down Lincoln's nose and hide in the nostril while the other man is looking for him, and while he's in the nostril, Cary Grant gets a sneezing fit. And gives himself away. Wasn't allowed to do it."[110] Even with this omission, Hitchcock still finds many absurd situations in which to place Grant. As Eve and Roger cling to the side of the monument, Roger announces, "If we ever get out of this alive, let's go back to New York on the train together, alright?" Eve asks, "Is that a proposition?" and Grant responds, "It's a proposal sweety." There is still time for repartee even facing death. It is as if Roger is as certain as we are that he will make it through this, and, of course, he will. At the final moment, when both seem doomed to

[109] Lehman Final Shooting Script 90, ELF232.009 .

[110] Gottlieb 199 interview with Andy Warhol in 1974

fall to their death, the government men appear and shoot Leonard (Martin Landau), who had been standing on Roger's hand in order to make him fall. To this event, Vandamm (James Mason) replies, "That wasn't very sporting, using real bullets." In the final lines of the film, Eve say, "Ahh, Roger. This is silly." Roger responds, "I know, but I'm sentimental." The whole film can be read as 'rather silly,' but this is intentionally done.

Plausibility

While most viewers and critics happily went along with the joke, not all of the reviewers praised Hitchcock's effort. Offended by the implausible fairytalesque dimensions of the film, Stanley Kauffman of *The New Republic* scathingly reported, "Like an old whore struggling desperately for remembered rapture, Hitchcock fumbles for his early ability to render familiar scenes and objects scary. But the urgent, encompassing reality of his first films is missing, and without it his antics simply look foolish."[111] Plausibility had also been a concern of Lehman's from the beginning. While Hitchcock's inclination was to favor cinematic pizzazz over rational narrative motivation, Lehman often had to step in and downplay the absurdity of certain events. Along with the chase across Mount Rushmore, Hitchcock had long been planning a scene at a Ford car assembly line. In the background, the audience would see a car slowly being constructed piece by piece in one long tracking shot. When the car has been finished, someone opens the trunk and a dead body falls out. This never found its way into *North by Northwest* or any Hitchcock film for that matter. Hitchcock had also wanted the mansion where the spies initially take Roger to interrogate him to deteriorate suddenly overnight so that when Roger returns with the police the next day, they find nothing but decay. Lehman would have no part of this sudden departure from reality and change in genre.

[111] Kauffman 23

Oddly enough, plausibility did at times frustrate Hitchcock. Lehman recalled a day on set in the train station when Hitchcock, unable to figure out how Eve would have the number to call the next phone booth where Leonard had instructions for her, walked off in a huff. A few minutes later, he returned satisfied with whatever scenario he had talked up for himself.[112] However, given the nightmarish nature of the story, much implausibility remains, and the film relies on a level of suspended disbelief from the viewers. Plot holes such as how Eve knew on which train Roger would end up, why the crop duster was necessary, why the detectives aboard the train believed Eve's story and didn't question her for longer give way to the visual and sensational enjoyment of the film with its grandiose soundtrack, elaborate set designs, vibrant colors, and pretty faces with superb acting ability.

The viewers do not need to believe fully in the story. Implausibility and absurd twists and turns also did not affect most critics' opinions, with Kauffman as the notable exception, and the film opened to rave reviews. Alton Cook called the film "a battle of wits between the audience and one of the wisest and wittiest layers of plot traps."[113] The *New York Times* credited Lehman, Hitchcock, and the cast, explaining, "as a happy troupe concerned only with keeping the customers interested and amused, they make improbable intrigue and melodrama as welcome as a zephyr in a doldrum."[114] The *New York Herald Tribune* said, "Mr. Hitchcock's alternation of comedy and suspense is so adroit that the occasional implausibility becomes a part of the joke," and "Cary Grant plays the lead as if he were the co-inventor of this romantic comedy roll."[115] In fact, most of the positive reviews point to Grant as a huge contributor to the film's success. The *New York Mirror* called Grant "so wonderfully sophisticated and stunned, in equal

[112] Lehman DVD Commentary
[113] Alton Cook *New York Work Telegram*, August 7 1959, ELF158.048
[114] A.H. Weiler, *New York Times*, August 16th, 1959, ELF158.048
[115] *New York Herald Tribune* by Gene Gleason, ELF158.048

parts, as all manner of screwy events swizzle about him, that he almost walks off with the picture. The role was practically custom-tailored for him."[116] The *New York Times* said Grant "was never more at home than in this role of the advertising-man-on-the-lam. He handles the grimaces, the surprised look, the quick smile, the aforementioned spooning and all the derring-do with professional aplomb and game."[117]

Lehman's Misgivings

While many of these reviews point out Lehman by name and applaud his witty script, Lehman became resentful of the director-biased Hollywood system, feeling his contributions were downplayed. In the Ernest Lehman Collection, hand written between lines in a *Life* interview with Hitchcock are Lehman's own criticisms of directorial credits. "What I <u>hate</u> about this typical LIFE layout is its clear implication that everything in a Hitchcock film is created by the director, as though I, the writer, never even existed."[118] At the end of the article is a screen shot of Grant frantically waving his arms for the truck to stop at the end of the crop duster sequence. The caption reads, "Screaming in terror over all the violent adventures Hitchcock has thought up for him, Cary Grant goes running down a road yelling for rescue." Lehman has written in the margins, "<u>Hitchcock</u> has thought up for him?" This may be a bit unfair as their notes do indicate Hitchcock had provided the inspiration for most of the situations. In another interview, shortly after the release of the film, Lehman once more showed his bitter resentment to playing second fiddle. "If you'll forgive me for saying so, Mr. Hitchcock has made a silk purse out of a writer's ear."[119] Thus the question exists: who should receive top billing for *North*

[116] Justin Gilbert pg 18, *New York Mirror* August 7, 1959, ELF158.048
[117] *New York Times* review pg 28, August 7, 1959, ELF158.048
[118] ELF 266.004
[119] Ibid.

by Northwest? Should one read it as a Lehman film over a Hitchcock one and where is Grant in all of this?

Ultimately, the narrative of *North by Northwest* is little more than different cinematic scenarios tied together by a spy narrative. The motivations within the plot are fuzzy at best, and most people take multiple viewings to piece it together. Yet viewers do not walk away from the film enchanted with the plausibility or likelihood of a mistaken ordinary man. They walk away with images of Grant hiding in a cornfield and dangling from Mount Rushmore. They walk away remembering spectacular cinematic moments. Moments override logical continuity, and what finally emerges is a Hitchcock film full of Hitchcockian motifs: wrongfully accused man with no one to turn to; suave, sophisticated villains; screwball love story; convoluted chase scenes where plausibility is secondary to visuals; bomb under the seat suspense; narration that lets the audience know more than protagonist; and train rides where the final destination is not nearly as important as going somewhere. Hitchcock had many of these devices in mind before ever conferring with Lehman. The latter's contribution is essential to the film's success without question. As is Grant's. Even Lehman admitted in an interview to John Brady,

> Well, *North by Northwest* would have been relatively nothing without its being *North by Northwest directed by Alfred Hitchcock*. … The mere presence of Hitchcock, plus his particular skills as a director – and the fact that he could get a Cary Grant with the greatest of ease – was an enormous help.[120]

Conclusion

The trajectory of Grant through his Hitchcock pictures can be summed up as the following. In the first film, he is initially a quirky love interest who later arouses the suspicion of his wife as a potential murderer. Five years later, he plays a cool, calm, collected love interest

[120]John Brady interview with Ernest Lehman, pg 190

who must overcome his jealousy to save the woman he loves. The outcome is a critically acclaimed film that Truffaut would call his favorite and would become an instant classic.[121] However, the role only allows for Grant's persona to emerge through his facial expression and verbal mannerisms as he has little action and mainly sits on the sidelines watching the story unfold. Nine years later, Hitchcock finally explores the fun and physical side of Grant and casts him as a love interest with an adventurous, carefree spirit who, along with his ability to capture the love of a woman with a mere smile, also has the physical agility to scale walls and crawl over rooftops.

Yet, something is still missing that Britton calls Grant's ability to undergo humiliation and loss of masculinity without being ridiculed.[122] Despite his charming, debonair manner and perhaps because of these qualities, Grant can handle humiliation. His vaudevillian background enables him to take a fall (literally and figuratively) for comic effect and to rise up with his pride intact, making him the quintessential screwball protagonist. In their final film together, Hitchcock finally uses Grant's persona to its fullest potential. Hitchcock himself admits,

> You are actually playing a character, but you are also playing the personality of Cary Grant. The value of having Cary Grant, the film star, is that the audience gets a little more emotion out of Cary Grant than they would from an unknown, because there is identification.[123]

While each of these films is first and foremost a Hitchcock picture, the presence of Cary Grant inevitably adds a layer of intertextuality to the film and, when used wisely and given the right genre, brings out the perfect level of humor and wit.

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[121] Truffaut 167
[122] Britton 6
[123] Gottlieb 92

Chapter Three: *Frenzy*: Hitchcock's Return to Britain

In 1972, Universal released Hitchcock's *Frenzy*. The film tells the story of Richard Blaney (Jon Finch), a man down on his luck, who after being fired from his job as a bartender, suddenly finds himself wrongfully accused of the rape and murder of his ex-wife. On the run

from the law, Blaney takes refuge with his good friend Bob Rusk (Barry Foster), who--lo and behold--is the true psycho killer. Rusk frames Blaney for his crimes, but not before raping and murdering Blaney's current girlfriend, and Blaney is convicted and sentenced to prison. Blaney, having put the pieces together, breaks out of prison and heads straight to Rusk's flat hoping to exact justice. However, Detective Oxford, who has been closely following the case, races to intercede, and in the end Oxford and Blaney catch Rusk attempting to discard his most recent victim.

This brief synopsis makes the story sound horrifically dreary, and with the subject of rape and murder, many moments of the film are just that. But amidst the horror, the film uses many techniques of humor. *Frenzy* takes the Hitchcock touch to a point of parody while overtly referencing a vast array of Hitchcockian themes, narrative devices, and formal tricks. Much of the humor in *Frenzy* relies on surprise, shattering expectations, and exaggeration (of which understatement is a form).

The success of *Frenzy*, which had largely to do with the dark humor, signaled a comeback for a director who had not had a blockbuster hit since *The Birds* (1963) almost ten years before. Hitchcock's two intervening films *Torn Curtain* (1966) and *Topaz* (1969) had received negative reviews from both critics and scholars alike, and with his top stars of the '50s such as Cary Grant and Grace Kelley in retirement, the untimely death of both his favorite cinematographer Robert Burks in '68 and favorite film editor George Tomasini in '64, his own fading health, and Universal's inability to secure him a decent script, the Master of Suspense's ability continually to captivate his audience was in serious question.

Now, once again, he could open a paper and read rave reviews. *Film Quarterly* called *Frenzy*, "A triumph in almost every way."[124] Roger Ebert exclaimed, "He's back at his old stand. […] It's delicious to watch Hitchcock using the camera. Not a shot is wasted." [125] *The Times* called Hitchcock, "A great director again making a film worthy of his great talents; the magic remains intact."[126] However, with the film's gratuitous violence including an onscreen rape, Hitchcock's first use of full frontal female nudity, and his most inscrutable protagonist yet, the film also had its naysayers. Even today, Hitchcock fans express mixed feelings. Reviewing it in Universal's "Hitchcock Collection" DVD edition, Mark Bourne describes *Frenzy* as a "thriller that delivers more misogyny and gratuitousness than shock and suspense," complaining that "rather than classic Hitchcock, *Frenzy* feels more like a lesser director's cookie-cutter 'Hitchcockian' knock-off."[127] Scott Von Doviak also complains, "While *Frenzy* shares much in common with prime Hitchcock, the film falls short of the director's best work in several important respects." [128]

But those who thumb their noses fail to consider the conscious efforts of the filmmaker taking his games to a finite level. Hitchcock uses *Frenzy* to play with his viewers' expectations which include his own persona. Like *North by Northwest,* the humor in *Frenzy* often relies on a viewer well-versed in the Hitchcock oeuvre as it constantly references and parodies the generic motifs and themes found in many of his previous films. Stefan Sharff explains the effect beautifully:

> *Frenzy*, seemingly a film within the genre, is, in fact, ascending to a finesse and ambivalence that satirizes and questions the rationale of the genre. Most importantly,

[124] Johnson 58
[125] Roger Ebert. "Frenzy." Rev. of Frenzy. *Chicago Sun-Times* 1 Jan. 1972.
[126] John Russell Taylor. "Frenzy: Hitchcock Magic Is Intact." Rev. of Frenzy. *The Times* 29 May 1972
[127] http://www.dvdjournal.com/quickreviews/f/frenzy.q.shtml
[128] http://www.culturevulture.net/Movies/Frenzy.htm

> Hitchcock's exquisite film language reaches here such heights of expressiveness that it becomes a showcase for cinema art.[129]

The dialogue also provides much of the film's humor so, as in my analysis of *North by Northwest*, I will look at the collaboration of Hitchcock and his writers. This time, however, I have two authors to consider. *Frenzy* was based on Arthur La Bern's novel *Goodbye Piccadilly, Farewell Leicester Square* (1972) and adapted to the screen by Anthony Shaffer. Thus, I now must conduct another study of adaptation. My analysis will work in the following way; I will identify specific moments in the final film that engender laughter and then endeavor to find the origins of these moments by looking to the novel, the screenplay, interviews with collaborators, production notes, and how specific Hitchcockian motifs find their way into the final film.

Kaleidoscope

Hitchcock had long been toying with the idea of making another serial killer story with a psychopath who was both attractive and vulnerable, in the vein of *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) and *Psycho* (1960). Both of these films' protagonists, Uncle Charlie and Norman Bates respectively, have sympathetic characteristics that intentionally mislead the viewers' first impressions of each man. Now, with the end of the production code and the growing popularity in the US of European auteurs such as Antonioni, Hitchcock hoped to develop an original screenplay with a modernist, art film countenance that would delve further into the mind of the sympathetic psycho. The project he had in mind, which he first called *Frenzy* but has later been referred to as *Kaleidoscope* for differentiation's sake*,* never came to fruition, but several drafts of initial treatments and scripts have been preserved at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences's Margaret Herrick Library and published in Dan Aulier's *Hitchcock's Notebooks*

[129] Sharff 168

(1999). Initially, Hitchcock enlisted the help of his old friend Benn Levy to develop a rough script and then tackled a lengthy treatment on his own which resulted in a story built around "three classic Hitchcock set pieces."[130] It seems Hitchcock was trying to approach creating an original screenplay in the vein of *North by Northwest* by first working out cinematic moments and then finding a way to insert plot, but this time, he had not the help of a screenwriter of Ernest Lehman's caliber. The story follows an attractive serial killer around New York as he entices women, kills them, and finds ways to dispose of the bodies. While Auiler emphasizes the differences between the initial idea and the eventual film, as "the first *Frenzy* [*Kaleidoscope*] is primarily about the handsome psychopath and then his female pursuer, [and] the second one is primarily about the unattractive, innocent man who is framed by his charming psychopathic friend," Aulier also discovers that many elements first developed in *Kaleidoscope's* initial treatments find their way into the 1972 film. These include the first brutal on-screen murder and the second off-screen murder handled with a slow tracking shot.[131]

Hitchcock sent an initial treatment of *Kaleidoscope/Frenzy* to his good friend François Truffaut for honest feedback. Truffaut wrote back with the following:

> I cannot help wondering if the second half of *Frenzy* may not be a little too simple. I think the reason for this lies in the fact that this is an original screenplay. When you adapt a novel, even if it is distilled to its bare essentials, subsidiary scenes always survive which, even if they might appear odd or unexpected, do enrich the finished film. In this case, we have only the main, essential plotline, and I worry that such directness which is so effective in the first half, might make the second half a trifle banal.[132]

[130] Aulier 545
[131] Auiler 546
[132] Auiler 291

Truffaut's feedback lends validity to Thomas Leitch's and Stephen DeRosa's criticism that Hitchcock works best by adapting preexisting work.[133] La Bern's novel *Goodbye Piccadilly*, *Farewell Leicester Square* provided the needed character depth and narrative structure *Kaleidoscope* lacked. The novel tells the story of Richard Blamey, a Royal Air Force veteran from World War II, who finds himself down on his luck. He has just lost his bartending job when his ex-wife Brenda turns up raped and murdered. Blamey is the prime suspect. On the run from the law, Blamey takes up with different friends along the way. Unfortunately, one of these friends, Bob Rusk, is the actual murderer. After murdering Blamey's new love interest, Babs, Rusk plants evidence on Blamey and calls the police. Blamey is convicted and sent to jail. Here, Blamey throws himself down a flight of stairs and ends up in the hospital where he readily makes his escape and heads towards Rusk's flat. The novel ends when Blamey enters and sees Rusk's latest victim sprawled out on the bed with a stocking tied round her neck.

With that basic information, all that was needed was a screenwriter who could help add the necessary Hitchcock touches to the work. Shaffer's play *Sleuth* (1969), a dark, comedic whodunit, had just opened to critical success, and contained much of the wit and sophistication Hitchcock's best films exude. Hitchcock sent Shaffer a copy of *Goodbye Piccadilly*, *Farewell Leicester Square* in the mail, but Shaffer at first thought it was a prank played by one of his friends. After Hitchcock assured him of his sincere intentions to work with him, Shaffer readily agreed to begin the process of adapting the novel into a quintessential Hitchcock thriller. Thus, Hitchcock had this property and collaborator for the new *Frenzy*.

[133] The notable exception is *North by Northwest* (1959), but this is a unique situation in which he had the exceptional talent of screenwriter Ernst Lehman and a caravan of stars to pull it off.

The Opening of *Frenzy*

The first step involved scouting locations. Hitchcock had not made a film in London, the city of his childhood, in over twenty years, and the nostalgia of returning to one's homeland seeps into the film's opening shot. The first fifteen minutes of film are also done with tongue-in-cheek. *Frenzy* opens with an aerial tracking shot of the city of London. Ron Goodwin's majestic and cheerful score comes in with gusto giving the impression one is entering a theme park or a fairy tale. After a dissolve, the camera lowers to a crowded pavilion over-looking the river, and the fairy tale continues as a candidate running for office promises his local citizens, "All the water above this point will soon be clear: clear of industrial effluent; clear of detergents; clear of the waste products of our society, with which for so long we have poisoned our rivers and canals." One of the onlookers is Hitchcock making his famous cameo appearance. Dressed in an old-fashioned suit and bowler hat, Hitchcock stands out like a sore thumb, and all the more so when he remains the only member of the crowd who does not applaud the speech. Yet, he has a bored expression on his face, as a disinterested party, the creator looking in on his work with an objective countenance.

Amidst this speech, a man turns and points to the aforementioned water shouting, "Look!" The crowd races to the edge of the pavilion and peers below where a naked woman floats face down in the water. Once pulled out, she appears to have been strangled as evidenced by the necktie wrapped tightly around her neck. This spurs conversation, and when one lady makes reference to Jack the Ripper, another gentleman replies, "Not on your life. He used to carve 'em up." Another man, upon examining the body closer, looks aghast and exclaims, "I say, that's not my club tie, is it?" Already, the film has begun parodying conventions of the thriller genre and Hitchcock motifs in general by exaggerating the "murder can occur in the safest of

places" theme with overly cheerful music and politicians promising a better, cleaner future, as well as mocking the crowd's blasé reactions to the crime.[134]

The dialogue that takes place here is found in Shaffer's script, but during the writing process, he kept in close contact with Hitchcock who often made dialogue suggestions of his own. The following note from Hitchcock to Shaffer on April 7, 1971, shows an example of this:

> Put in rigor mortis at the beginning of the picture when the body is being pulled out of the river, with dialogue between two men to the effect of:
> "looks like rigor mortis has set in."
> "rigor mortis – what's that?"
> "That's when the body gets stiff."
> "That's why they call a corpse, 'a stiff.'"[135]

This note illustrates the difficulties in assigning individual authorship to specific passages in the screenplay, for while Shaffer experienced the same freedom as Lehmann and wrote the screenplay mostly left alone, Hitchcock would at times provide detailed instructions for dialogue that often set the macabre and humorous tone of the script. However, this tone came about easily as both Hitchcock and Shaffer had demonstrated they had a similar aesthetic concerning dark humor in their previous works: an aesthetic completely absent in La Bern's novel.

In fact, this whole opening sequence owes its existence to Hitchcock. Here, the tie stands in as one of Hitchcock's motifs of using "things" for cinematic effect taken to a gruesome extreme, another hint at parody. La Bern never treats murder with tongue-in-cheek or makes allusions to Jack the Ripper, and his murderer doesn't obsess with ties or tie emblems. The novel opens rather dully with the protagonist mulling around at his day job, and murder does not factor into the plot until chapter three

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[134] Hitchcock used this scene in his trailer where he further poked fun at the thriller genre by inserting himself in the dead woman's role. He floats down the river in the same suit and bowler hat telling us the horror for which we should prepare.
[135] Alfred Hitchcock collection folder 251 "*Frenzy*"

The Protagonist as Suspect

It is the novel's loss, for after having introduced the neck-tie murderer, the film cuts to the main protagonist Richard Blaney straightening his tie in a mirror. Hitchcock is no amateur when it comes to intentionally deceptive montage and knows perfectly well how a viewer typically interprets such juxtaposition. A woman has been found strangled with a tie. Blaney wears a similar tie. Ergo, Blaney could have murdered the woman. Again, the avid Hitchcock viewer is wary of such blatant misdirection. But, Hitchcock keeps up the shenanigans and continues to depict Blaney as a prime suspect in the following scenes.

Blaney enters a pub where two men sit discussing the case of the necktie strangler with the barmaid. "He rapes 'em first, doesn't he?" the barmaid asks, to which one gentleman replies, "I suppose it's nice to know every cloud has a silver lining." After a release of chuckles and groans, the second gentleman gives a profile to sexual maniacs and explains, "Being governed by the pleasure principle, they're particularly dangerous when their desires are being frustrated." This speech takes place off to the side, while in the foreground, Blaney yells at the bartender, demanding a stiffer drink. He has nothing but frustration drawn across his face.

Just like the onlookers in the opening scene, no one in the pub seems too terribly troubled by the fact a psychotic murderer roams the streets. The matter-of-fact dialogue continues the humorous understatement from the opening scene. This type of humor can be found in excess in both Hitchcock's early British films as well as Shaffer's play *Sleuth*. But it never appears in La Bern's novel. After leaving the bar, Blaney's mood grows worse, and he angrily quashes a box of grapes before dropping in on his ex-wife where more yelling ensues. The film has painted a most unpleasant man. He is belligerent, rude, jobless, and a drunk.

The film has done its utmost to present Blaney as a calloused individual capable of murder. This is similar to how *North by Northwest* introduces Thornhill's character, in a less than sympathetic light, but without Grant's familiar face in the role of Blaney, the viewer falls more easily into the deception inserted in *Frenzy*. When asked why the cast of *Frenzy* did not comprise of big, international stars, Hitchcock replied, "When you do a mystery starring Cary Grant, everybody in the audience knows from the outset that he can't be the villain."[136][137] Regardless, while Finch's performance creates a credible amount of suspicion, it is short-lived, for fifteen minutes into the film, the real killer is revealed. The initial deceit does not annoy or frustrate the viewer; its intention has less to do with leading one astray than it does with calling attention to Hitchcock's authorial presence. He is a master trickster known for twists and turns, and now that the film has indicated Blaney's innocence, the viewers release a laugh of chagrin, for, of course, Blaney is innocent. He is the typical Hitchcock protagonist wrongfully accused of another's crimes. The film uses Hitchcockian motifs to make a game out of the viewing experience.

This game is unique to the film, for unlike Blaney, the novel's protagonist, Richard Blamey, never comes under the reader's suspicion, despite his name. Like Blaney, Blamey is a disagreeable fellow with few friends. He is rude, belligerent, constantly drinks, and with La Bern's use of the third-person omniscient point of view to capture Blamey's inner thoughts, the reader knows Blamey has very little consideration for anyone around him. However, unlike the film, the novel provides a motive for his unsympathetic behavior. The novel begins with Blamey, while at work bartending, discovering an old military friend was found hanged in a cell

[136] http://www.anthonyshaffer.co.uk/screenplays/frenzy.html
[137] The relatively unknown cast does help add to the stark realism and opening hesitations toward Blaney in *Frenzy,* but I wager had Grant been twenty years younger and out of retirement, Hitchcock would have jumped at a chance to make him his victim protagonist.

in Brixton Prison the night before. This news upsets Blamey to the point he must pour himself a drink at work. His boss immediately discovers this and fires him for stealing. His old friend's suicide occupies his thoughts throughout the duration of the novel and influences his decision to evade the cops. When his friends Barbara and Dick plead with him to turn himself in, Blamey fears ending in a cell would unhinge his mind and explains, "I'm trying to preserve my sanity, trying to act normally, trying to laugh at jokes, trying not to think about what happened to Brenda – but if I was shut up in a remand cell in Brixton for twenty-two hours of the day, accused of killing the woman I once loved, Christ, I'd go stark raving mad."[138] Unlike La Bern, however, Hitchcock and Shaffer are not interested in exploring the protagonist's psyche or providing plausibility for his actions. Instead, their main interest lies in playing with techniques of humor and surprise to disrupt generic conventions and audience expectations—hallmarks of a Hitchcock film.

Horror and Humor

Up to this point, my analysis has focused on the differences between novel and film (mainly regarding the insertion of humor in the film). However, much of the film's narrative comes straight from the pages of the novel, including the two most infamous scenes of the film: Brenda's rape scene and Rusk's retrieval of an incriminating tie pin from a corpse in the back of a potato truck. Both involve grotesque images and gruesome violence, leaving little room for witty banter or funny asides. In choosing to adapt *Goodbye Piccadilly* to the screen, Hitchcock knew he would have to face difficult and dark subject material, and he was up for the challenge. My analysis of each of these scenes will reveal how he boldly attacked the material with all the craft he could muster. But my main interest in these scenes is not so much the formal elements

[138] La Bern 107

but the humorous sequences that follow the horror. Again, Hitchcock, with Shaffer's help, chooses to reward the viewers--or at least offer a release after each violent episode-- with doses of humor. Such reprieves do not exist in the novel.

In the first rape scene, Shaffer pulls most of the dialogue and much of the action straight from the novel. Brenda, the first victim, realizes she is in danger from her former client when the man explains, "You're my type of woman."[139] In a last attempt to flee from him, "She kicked out at him with both feet. He fell backwards and she ran towards the door but he caught her by the ankle and she fell."[140] After he rapes and strangles her, "He was not in the least unnerved by the fact that Brenda's blue eyes were now open and staring up at him as he went towards the door. He knew there was no longer any sight in those eyes."[141]

Hitchcock borrows these lines but enhances the suspense with formal aesthetics, making it Hitchcock in nature. As Brenda's impending doom draws nearer, the camera becomes increasingly subjective as it offers both Brenda's and Rusk's point-of-view shots and begins to move increasingly closer to the action. Extreme close-ups of Brenda's face fill the screen, and one plainly sees the shock and horror on Brenda's face as well as the lust and craze on Rusk's as he overpowers her and slowly undoes his tie. After a horrific struggle off-screen, the film cuts back to a medium shot and shows Brenda's dead body splayed out on the couch, her eyes wide open, and her tongue sticking out. Up to this point, music has been absent, but with this cut, the soundtrack enters with fierce power, and, in direct contrast to the fairy tale anthem of the film's opening sequence, an unharmonious chord resounds. The sudden change in both music and shot composition jolts the viewer back to the realization that this is a film consciously constructed by a master of suspense. The horror of the scene is almost unbearable to watch, but at the end,

[139] La Bern 51
[140] La Bern 52
[141] La Bern 56

Hitchcock rewards the viewer with an absurd image of her body and calls attention to the film medium by playing with style and form. When asked about this scene, Hitchcock replied, "The rape scene comes under the heading of, 'What is worth doing is worth doing well.' In other words, that's a technical thing."[142]

A new chain of suspense builds as Rusk leaves Brenda's office building. A long tracking shot follows Rusk walking down the street. As he turns a corner, the camera turns back to the building, and Blaney appears from around the other corner. Finding the door locked, he walks away as the secretary returns. The secretary gives him a suspicious look before entering the building. The camera stays on the exterior, and several seconds of inactivity elapse. This one shot has raised many suspenseful questions. Will Rusk get away? Will Blaney spot him? Does the secretary suspect Blaney? When will she scream? After a prolonged silence, the scream finally occurs, and the viewer exhales. Taylor describes this scene in his 1972 *Times* film review and concludes, "These are perhaps obvious Hitchcock tricks; but if they are so obvious, why has no one else ever managed to do them so well? and not for want of triers [sic], either."[143]

The viewer's subjection to this heightened intensity through the self-conscious narration has its reward in the following scenes when Shaffer's script veers from the novel and makes use of humor once more to undercut the serious and dramatic event. When the police sergeant in charge of the investigation asks the secretary about Blaney, the prime suspect, she offers this detailed description:

> He was a man in his thirties, about an inch or so under six foot tall. He had dark hair, green eyes, and a moustache. I estimate his weight at about 155 pounds. He was wearing a rather old-fashioned jacket with leather patches on the shoulders and elbows. In my opinion, it was quite unsuitable for London. He was also carrying a raincoat.

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[142] Gottlieb 107
[143] Taylor's, John Russell. "Frenzy: Hitchcock Magic Is Intact." Rev. of Frenzy. *The Times* 29 May 1972.

The sergeant's expression mirrors the viewer's incredulity, and he replies, "That's an extraordinarily precise description, Miss Barling." More than extraordinarily precise, it is ridiculously and absurdly precise, and by acknowledging one's incredulity, the film once more calls attention to its own structure and form, which has the Hitchcock Touch written all over it.[144] Hitchcock also left a note to Shaffer saying, "Monica should wear glasses (nearsighted)," which makes her accurate description all that more hilarious.[145] Part of laughter released when the secretary offers her unexpectedly detailed description results from the viewer's consciousness at having given into the Master's obvious tricks. In the novel, the secretary also provides the police with Blamey's description, but she simply says, "He was wearing exactly the same clothes as yesterday."[146]

The film continues to provide humorous dialogue in the next scene where Blaney tries to convince Babs of his innocence. The two have just discovered Brenda's murder and the police's search for Blaney in the morning paper. "Do I look like a sex murderer to you? Can you imagine me creeping around London, strangling all those women with ties? That's ridiculous. For a start, I only own two." Babs decides to believe him, and the two embrace in a kiss. What is even more ridiculous than strangling women with ties is Blaney's lack of shock and horror at having learned of his ex-wife's murder, again what Hitchcock calls humorous understatement.

The Long Tracking Shot

This brief honeymoon period ends when the film returns to the narrative provided by the novel, and Babs becomes Rusk's next victim. La Bern places the reader right in the room with

[144] This scene is also reminiscent of *The Lady Vanishes* when the protagonist Iris gives an overly detailed description of an old woman who has gone missing from her tweed suit down to her blue handkerchief. After which she confesses she didn't get a great look.
[145] Alfred Hitchcock collection folder 251 "*Frenzy*," "April 1, 1971, Hitch to Shaffer"
[146] La Bern 72

the killer and spends a great deal of attention to describing Babs's body after Rusk kills her. "Her eyes stared up at the ceiling, glassy like those of a baby doll a trickle of blood congealing at the corner of her mouth. After a while, tears began to splash onto her face but the tears were not hers. She would never cry again."[147] Again, no suspense builds in this novel's scene, and the readers have no time to hope for a possible escape for Babs. Its purpose is to emphasize further the horrific nature of the sexual psychopath on the loose. But the film has already horrified its audience with Brenda's onscreen rape. Repeating the violence would prove superfluous, and so instead, the film creates suspense by taking the opposite action: showing nothing and thereby leaving the scene to the viewer's morbid imagination. The film achieves this effect by employing another Hitchcock device, his signature tracking shot.

The camera follows Babs and Rusk up the stairs to his apartment door. As the door closes behind them, Rusk tells Babs, "You're my kind of girl." The door closes, and the camera slowly pulls away from the apartment, out the building's door, and across a busy street. The further away the camera pulls, the louder the diegetic sounds of the city become until the volume reaches the point where a scream would go unnoticed. Everything in the frame suggests normalcy, but amidst this setting, a sexual psychopath has trapped his next victim. The opposition between what the spectator sees through the lens of the camera and what one imagines taking place in Rusk's apartment creates a terror in the viewer just as real if not more so than that created by seeing Brenda's murder first hand. The street adds an everyday component to the scene--murders go on, perhaps all around us--and makes the suspense relevant not just to the world of Hitchcock but to that of reality.

Assigning authorship to this shot is difficult. In *Sight and Sound*, Shaffer took credit for this technique saying point blank, "I wrote the famous 'Farewell to Babs' tracking shot down the

[147] La Bern 123

stairs and out into Covent Garden in the first draft, before Hitch even read it."[148] Again, in the documentary *The Story of 'Frenzy'* (2001), Shaffer says he convinced Hitchcock not to show the second rape and introduced the phrase "You're my kind of a girl" as a way to signal that violence would occur so as not to show it. However, this line comes straight from La Bern's novel. Moreover, Hitchcock had also planned a very similar tracking shot for *Kaleidoscope* whose purpose is to pull away from a rape that will soon occur. Of course, it is very possible that while endeavoring to write a Hitchcock film, Shaffer would come up with a Hitchcockian move all on his own. So perhaps this is Shaffer's contribution influenced by Hitchcock's style. I am of the opinion that had the former been absent from the film, a similar shot would still have existed, but this conjecture should not downplay the probable contributions of Shaffer to the final film.

Murder and the Theater of the Absurd

The screenplay turns again to the novel to provide the details of how Rusk disposes of Babs's corpse. In both versions, Rusk ties the body in a burlap sack and tosses the sack into the back of a potato truck scheduled to make a delivery later that night.[149] The novel never makes light of its subject. However, the film plays with the scene's tone by orchestrating Rusk's escapade with a whimsical soundtrack reminiscent of *Mary Poppins* (1964). The film's music continues as Rusk returns to his apartment and pours himself a celebratory drink. However, something is amiss. Suddenly, the music stops, and Rusk realizes he has lost his monogrammed necktie pin. He frantically rummages through his belongings, and as the truth sinks in, he stops and looks up. In twelve quick shots comprised of dimly lit close-ups, Hitchcock inserts a

[148] http://www.anthonyshaffer.co.uk/screenplays/frenzy.html
[149] In this scene, the novel names Rusk as the murderer for the first time, but this reveal has little affect on the reader and feels like an afterthought on La Bern's part. The reader has not had the opportunity to form any strong opinions on Rusk.

flashback to Babs's death revealing that Rusk's pin ended up in Babs's clenched fist. Introduced with these shots are the disharmonious chords first heard after Brenda's death. The dramatic changes in music, tempo, lighting, and type of shots ask for an immediate response in the viewer which calls for a controversial alignment with the killer. In the following scene, fostering this alignment plays a critical role in creating suspense as Rusk returns to the corpse to retrieve a piece of incriminating evidence.

Again, the retrieval scene is lifted almost word for word from novel to screenplay, with the exception of the lost item: in the novel it is an apartment key, and ties play no part in the strangulation. Finding himself in the back of the moving potato truck, La Bern's Rusk,

> […] fumbled across to the other side of the body and located the clenched fist of her right hand. He tried to prise the fingers open, but they were as tight as a coiled spring. […] There was only one thing to do. He would have to break her fingers, but groping like this he could not obtain sufficient leverage. He would have to pull her out of the sack.[150]

Shaffer and Hitchcock's Rusk undergoes the same struggle. He futilely gropes around the truck coming to the same realization that brutal force must be applied. Just like the first rape scene, what makes this moment quintessentially Hitchcock is not the narrative construction or source material. Both were originally authored by La Bern and subsequently borrowed by Shaffer. It is the use of subjective camerawork with intense close-ups and agonizing point-of-view shots, the use of sound with an absence of soundtrack and enhanced diegetic car noises, and a consciously lit set with a minimal light source and random bursts of headlights. Ultimately, it is Hitchcock's visual style that aligns the viewer with the killer to create the element of suspense. But the Hitchcock Touch depends partly on humor, and in the one moment where the screenplay diverges from the novel in this sequence, the corpse's foot flies out and kicks Rusk in the face. While the viewers' momentarily alignment causes them to feel the frustration Rusk undergoes,

[150] La Bern 132

the kick also returns the viewers to a nonparticipatory position where the kick is well justified and morbidly comic. After this punishment, Rusk succeeds in snapping the corpse's finger and retrieving the monogrammed pin.

Among Hitchcock scholars, this scene has received more than its share of critique and censure. In *The Woman Who Knew Too Much,* Tania Modleski interprets Rusk's kick in the face as a form of punishment for the viewer and a "repayment for all the times cinema has fetishized the female body, dismembering it for the sheer erotic pleasure of the male spectator."[151] Responding to this reading, Susan Smith in *Hitchcock: Suspense, Humour and Tone* argues Modleski minimizes "certain complexities to do with the suspense and the humour."[152] Leitch expounds upon these complexities but criticizes Hitchcock's apparent abuse of the viewer arguing, "*Frenzy* makes the audience laugh but makes them ashamed for laughing, simultaneously allowing and condemning the release it encourages."[153] To this I must ask, which audience does Leitch assume feels ashamed? Few would find an actual serial killer who rapes and strangles his victims amusing, but to those who view Hitchcock as a man who has consciously created his persona and understands his audiences' expectations of him, a pleasure derives from watching the director take these expectations and push them to their limit. Vincent Canby sums it up best in his *New York Times* review stating:

> Were Hitchcock less evident throughout the film, *Frenzy* would be as unbearable as it probably sounds when I report that the killer has to break the fingers of the corpse. Yet it is something more than just bearable because never for a minute does one feel the absence of the storyteller, raising his eyebrows in mock woe.[154]

The storyteller's mockery becomes readily apparent in the next scene that takes place at dinner time in the home of Detective Oxford. Here, the film abruptly switches from a scene with

[151] Modleski 108-9
[152] Smith 23
[153] Leitch 250, 1991
[154] Canby

overly heightened suspense to one comprised of humor thus calling attention to its deliberate and deceiving affect.

Plausibility and Avoidance of the Cliché

As my previous chapter suggests, a part of the writer's work when collaborating with Hitchcock involved adding a level of plausibility to his outlandish tales, at least enough to keep the viewer from walking out in utter disbelief. Often times, this meant finding creative ways to compromise. Shaffer needed to insert an explanatory scene revealing what evidence the police had collected against Blaney. The novel, written as a straightforward police procedural, had many scenes with Oxford pouring over documents in his office at police headquarters. But Hitchcock disliked police procedurals and avoided them for the same reason he avoided whodunits arguing, "They're rather like a crossword or jigsaw puzzle; there's no room for emotion." [155]

However, Shaffer had made a successful career out of whodunits and found Hitchcock's approach to mysteries wanting for their lack of plausibility. Upon meeting Hitchcock for the first time, Shaffer pointed out to him, "There are huge holes in a number of your films that logically make no sense."[156] When Hitchcock asked for an example, Shaffer cited the train sequence in *North by Northwest* (1959). How did the villains know on which train R.O. Thornhill would travel? Hitchcock, never a stickler for plausibility, shrugged this off by relating to Shaffer an anecdote of the ice-box syndrome. This involves a couple arguing late at night by the refrigerator about plot holes in the film they have viewed earlier that evening. The argument

[155] Shaffer 73
[156] Shaffer 68

results in a second viewing. "I've got 'em twice," Hitchcock replied.[157] However, as I discussed in chapter 2, *North by Northwest* does have an explanatory scene informing the viewers of the thorough nature of Roger's plight that takes place in a thoroughly common room accompanied by ordinary people who happen to be secret government spies. Adhering to similar thematic principles in this scene, Shaffer gained Hitchcock's approval for adding narrative plausibility and bringing the detective aspect to the story by utilizing two theories Hitchcock often preached: avoiding the cliché and employing understatement, both of which result in additional humor in *Frenzy*. In an interview, Hitchcock explained the following:

> Now, the cliché is the Scotland Yard officer and chief inspector discussing the case with one of the underlings. And what do you get? You get a scene that you've seen on television a hundred times. You are putting over certain plot elements, but it seems to me that creatively you have to think of a substitute for this. And the substitute must be something that will have some quality to it. The quality of character, with an additional factor of humanizing the chief inspector. You see, you can do several things when you avoid the cliché.[158]

The substitute for the police officers' talk becomes the dinner table, where Oxford mulls over the facts of the case with his wife. To spice up the scene, however, and much to the dismay of her husband, Mrs. Oxford has taken up cooking French cuisine, a cuisine of which Oxford finds disgusting. These scenes take the tone of a whodunit, Shaffer's original contributions to the screenplay, for as Oxford discusses the case of Blaney with his wife, the viewers have a better understanding of the stakes involved and the insurmountable evidence against Blaney. It becomes clear that Blaney turning himself in is not a viable option. With his wife busy rummaging around in the kitchen, Oxford sneakily spoons pieces of fish from his bowl back into its serving dish. He describes how Blaney fits the profile of a typical sexual psychopath to which his wife retorts, "You're wrong, dear, absolutely wrong. It can't be this guy." She reasons that

[157] Shaffer 69
[158] Gottlieb 181

after ten years of marriage, Blaney would never now suddenly kill his wife. The inspector remains skeptical and declares, "We have to find him before his appetite is wetted again." The word choice draws even more attention to the subordinate plot of the uneaten food.

While Shaffer's dialogue provides humor on its own account, Hitchcock's aesthetics enhance these humorous moments giving them their kick. Amidst the couple's conversation, Hitchcock inserts close-up point-of-view shots of the grotesque dinner and reverse shots of Oxford's pained expression. The subjective camera places the viewer in line with Oxford's distress, and, while one feels for him, it seems absurd and trivial to focus on one's dinner when a psychotic killer runs loose. Thus, the use of humorous action makes light of the serious nature of murder. While these are common Hitchcock techniques of humor, and Hitchcock certainly must be credited for the addition of making food an important character in the film, the first drafts of the screenplay as well as Shaffer's notes indicate Shaffer is largely responsible for the funny dialogue. One line, occurring as Oxford tells his wife of the suspected neck-tie murderer trial's conclusion and the latter unself-consciously replying, "That ties it up then," has been added to the second draft in Shaffer's own handwriting. Then again, Hitchcock did initially add the motif of the tie, and he was also responsible for the film's final line. In a note from Hitchcock dating March 31, 1971, he discusses adding tongue-in-cheek to the final scene, "Oxford immediately switches the light on and says something like: 'Mr. Rusk, you haven't got your tie on.'"[159]

Again, the book never makes light of detective work or brings it into the home away from the office. La Bern describes his detective in the following way:

> Oxford never appeared to be in a hurry. He worked long hours, rarely had a week-end off and rarely raised his voice. He was conscientious, cautious, and never flurried. He was always wary of assuming the guilt of a too obvious suspect.[160]

[159] Alfred Hitchcock collection folder 251 "Frenzy"
[160] La Bern 91

Despite Shaffer's efforts, many of the original contributions to the screenplay still bring an amount of implausibility that requires the viewers' suspended disbelief. Even Hitchcock's wife, Alma Reville, left a note concerned with certain loose ends asking, "Where does Rusk's mother go? Is she on a visit? Has suit gone to the cleaners? Does Rusk know Blaney's wife? I mean his ex-wife? Wouldn't Blaney tell his defense lawyer about Rusk?"[161] This last question also plagued the associate producer, William Hill. In an interoffice memorandum addressed to Jim Weinberg, Hill argues,

> The inspector in charge of the case is intelligent, competent and creative. The detective work he did after the trial could (and probably would) have taken place before it. Even the thing that eventually triggered the detective work (porter's alibi evidence) should have come to light at or before the trial; Blaney knew where the porters could be reached. There are cases where English justice has convicted the wrong man (such as the case used in 10 Rillington Place), but it is unlikely that this would have been one of them.[162]

These plot holes failed to concern Hitchcock. The question is not so much why would this happen or how likely is it that this scenario could unfold but rather to capture this story with effective affect. How can we pull one over on the viewer and make them simultaneously laugh and groan in delight, surprise, and sheer horror? Hitchcock understood the unique properties of the world he created and had the confidence the viewers would accept this world, as they had time and time again.

Along with implausible plot points, many, including La Bern, criticized *Frenzy* for its use of outdated language and its representation of an England not consistent with the '70s but harking back to a time fifty years previous. In *The Times* letter to the editor, La Bern responded to the film with the following:

> The result on the screen is appalling. The dialogue is a curious amalgam of an old Aldwych farce, *Dixon of Dock Green* and that almost forgotten *No Hiding Place*. I would like to ask Mr. Hitchcock and Mr. Shaffer what happened between book and script to the

[161] Alfred Hitchcock collection folder 251 "Frenzy"
[162] Alfred Hitchcock collection, Folder 331 "Frenzy," July 9, 1971

> authentic London characters I created. Finally: I wish to dissociate myself with Mr. Shaffer's grotesque misrepresentation of Scotland Yard offices.[163]

Shaffer also commented on the outdated dialogue but argued that was how Hitchcock wanted it. La Bern failed to understand that when entering a Hitchcock adaptation, one enters into a fictional Hitchcockian world where suspense and humor intermingle in a fantastical way. Hitchcock does not intend to represent people or places with absolute honesty or even plausibility. Taylor agrees that "it somehow seems right that these characters, even if they pretend to live in the 1970s, should talk like regulars of Patrick Hamilton's *Midnight Bell*," and Leitch also admits this is not the world of London, "but rather the Hitchcock world, a checkerboard whose fixed and familiar pattern is requisite to the moves of each new game."[164]

Conclusion

Much like *North by Northwest*, most viewers do not walk away from the film upset with plot holes or the prosecution's incompetence. They have just stepped off a Hitchcock roller coaster, and, along with a touch of vertigo, what lingers are the elevated moments of suspense and humor. La Bern's novel provided the backbone of the story. A man's ex-wife is murdered, and he is wrongfully accused. But La Bern's purpose seems to be focused on elevating the public opinion of diligent inspectors who, while they may occasionally send the wrong man to jail, will in the end make right their wrong; the novel approaches its subject of murder in a very dry and dull way, almost doing an injustice to the police procedural. What turns this dry storyline into cinema is a carefully woven script full of witty dialogue and memorable scenes brought to life by an eager cast and an experienced director. Hitchcock credited the film's success over his previous two due to its authentic "English" humor explaining:

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[163] Arthur La Bern. Letters to the Editor: Hitchcock's "Frenzy," The Times 29 May 1972.
[164] Leitch 246, 1991.

> See, in a picture like *Topaz,* how can I make the jokes? Because I have got Frenchmen talking English, Cubans talking English, it's very difficult to get to the core of what one's after. And then again, in *Torn Curtain* you've got East Germany with English being spoken, so there's a kind of an underlying untruth to those kinds of things. Whereas if you take *Frenzy*, it's true all the way through – true in its setting, true in its characters, and true in its humor. This is what the difference is. It's the opportunity.[165]

While humor has a way of getting lost in translation, this statement is an oversimplified excuse for *Topaz* and *Torn Curtain*, films Hitchcock deemed failures, and a definition of what he considers "truth" is sorely missing in his array of interviews to properly interpret this testimonial. However, he lands on a crucial point: the opportunity. Traveling to England where talented actors came cheap and willing, where he could work away from the meddlesome studio heads, where he had the rights to procure a film within a genre he was well versed, and where he found a witty screenwriter whose aesthetics complimented his own provided an apt opportunity for humor.

[165] Gottlieb 118

Conclusion

In each of these case studies, the more creative freedom Hitchcock had over the entire process, the funnier the film and the more praiseworthy the reviews at least in terms of crediting Hitchcock with the success. His David O. Selznick era was a time when his freedom was at an all-time low. As Hitchcock was under contract, Selznick had the say as to which films Hitchcock made, and thus, the director of thrillers entered his American period with melodramas and woman's films, genres shy of wit and giggles. However, during the making of both *Rebecca* and *Spellbound*, Hitchcock had quite a bit of say over his writers, and even within the generic confinements, Hitchcock and his creative writing team tried to insert comedy. This effort often was in vain as Selznick asserted his control over Hitchcock's and vetoed the laughs, limiting Hitchcock's authorial presence.

Away from studio control and strict guidelines, Hitchcock found the freedom in America to insert humor once more. *North by Northwest* and *Frenzy* provide two perfect examples of Hitchcock's unchecked creative control. As to the former, Hitchcock admitted MGM was unaware for many months that he and Ernest Lehman had even begun work on an original picture, but since his popularity was thriving at this time, the studio allowed for the deception and the end result was a hilarious box-office hit. The production of *Frenzy* also went off without much studio supervision as it was a lower budget production being shot thousands of miles away. Hitchcock's creative freedom afforded him the opportunity to choose films within his much beloved genre and writers and actors of his choosing. Amidst these conditions, humor emerged. I argued both films as quintessential Hitchcock masterpieces, as they both employ layers of

intertextuality, consciously referencing and parodying common Hitchcock motifs in an effort to make Hitchcock's authorial presence felt and to invoke laugher. The referential nature of these films owes a huge debt to the collaborators involved. *North by Northwest* needed the comedic talents of Cary Grant and Lehman to overcome the frenetic plot line and become sheer joy. Likewise, *Frenzy* needed a writer who could help turn a morose tale into a black comedy.

When looking at a historical trajectory of humor across Hitchcock's oeuvre, it would be purposeless and misguided to make many broad generalizations. His age and experience certainly contributed to increasingly mature and complex themes and tones, but the amount and type of humor remains fluctuating and inconsistent. At times, a learning curve appears as in the case of his collaboration with Grant where it took over fifteen years for Hitchcock to direct a film fully utilizing the screwball comedian's abilities. However, this evolutionary process does not consistently show up across the board, once more suggesting it is not the maturation of talent that contributes to humor but the unique opportunities presented to Hitchcock at various points in his career. *North by Northwest* and *Frenzy* could not have been made in the early years of Hitchcock's career, for he did need the years to develop his touch and prove his abilities as director to secure the writers and actors essential to pulling it off, but fifteen years spans these films. He had the years and had made contact with the talent but still failed consistently to turn out films with such humor.

As to the techniques of humor used across the array of Hitchcock films: they vary significantly creating very different tones. As my analysis has shown, the humor in *Spellbound* depends largely on language. Puns and wordplay abound, many of which have a sexual connotation that provide the film with tones of romance and melodrama. Hitchcock's films with Grant progressively use situational comedy and physical humor, tipping their hat to the tradition

of screwball and slapstick. And in *Frenzy,* the macabre is unleashed as techniques of understatement, irony, allusions, and surprise mix to deliver a film full of black humor and sinister suspense.

Many factors account for the change in technique and tone. One is a change in film culture. By the time of *Frenzy*, censorship had loosened its reins allowing nudity and onscreen violence to a degree that would have been impossible for Hitchcock's earlier films to show. Hitchcock explained in an interview how it was now possible for him to kill off his love interest (referring to Babs's murder in *Frenzy*) simply stating, "Times have changed."[166] Such a surprising twist would never have been allowed in the 30's and 40's.

Again, a crucial factor for change in technique and tone is the change in his collaborators. Under Selznick's tutelage, Hitchcock's wit and levity was constrained, and the screwball antics that flourished in Hitchcock's British films were temporarily put on hold. However, while Selznick may have stifled the laughs, he provided Hitchcock access to A-list stars: one of which was none other than Grant. Grant and Hitchcock continued their professional relationship long after Hitchcock's contract with Selznick was up. And as their collaboration continued, Hitchcock's films with Grant became increasingly funny as Grant's comedic and physical abilities are more readily showcased. With the help of screenwriter Ernest Lehman, *North by Northwest* became the compendium of Hitchcock's and Grant's collaboration. In it, each man has time to showcase his humorous side in a referential mode that forces the audience to laugh not at but with the filmmaker and actor as Grant's character suffers through one humiliating circumstance after another in full screwball fashion.

However, despite the levity of this film, Hitchcock at times revealed a darker side [as Donald Spoto expounds upon in *The Dark Side of Genius: Life of Alfred Hitchcock* (1994)]. But

[166] Gottlieb 140

this side still had a sense of humor, albeit a morbid one. Having Anthony Shaffer, a writer also notable for his dry wit and macabre imagination, at his side, Hitchcock had the opportunity to make a film that used black humor in a clever way that not only made the viewers laugh and cringe at the same, but made them reflect on the oeuvre of Hitchcock as a whole, thus contributing to the complexity of *Frenzy*.

For future study, I would encourage scholars to venture in the direction of the archives. My case studies are relevant, but they are only stepping stones to understanding how Hitchcock negotiates humor with his collaborators. The Alfred Hitchcock Collection housed at the Margaret Herrick Library, and the Ernest Lehman Collection and the David O. Selznick Collection housed at the Harry Ransom Center served me well. While many scholars have utilized these resources, they are by no means tapped out. Collaborative authorship has emerged in Hitchcock studies and those scholars such as Leonard Leff and Steven DeRosa have provided comprehensive and thorough accounts of Hitchcock's dealings with producer Selznick and screenwriter John Michael Hayes respectively. However, what both these accounts briefly mention but fail to delve further, is how these collaborations result in a plethora and/or lack of humor and what this means for how Hitchcock's viewers read the films. Along with exploring the relationship of producers, writers, actors, and assistants, I would also encourage study of another often ignored contributor: the composer. In particular, Bernard Herrmann's contributions to Hitchcock's most celebrated films including *Vertigo*, *North by Northwest*, and *Psycho* helped set the pace and tone of adventure and suspense, which works hand in hand with the humor achieved in these films.

No, Hitchcock did not do it alone, but his is the name audiences remember. And while he depended upon talented collaborators, this is perhaps not entirely unjustified. For while his

various collaborators provided Hitchcock with the opportunity to explore different techniques and tones of humor, and while Hitchcock was notorious for 'steamrolling' over other's contributions (he was often criticized for having referred to actors as cattle, and in an interview, admitted he had little use for screen writers), his touch is personal and distinctive. Every Hitchcock film needs Hitchcock, the man, behind the camera, and Hitchcock needs the opportunity to introduce humor. Hitchcock, himself, understood this crucial need and explained:

> Humor is the loss of dignity, it's the loss of the normal, it's therefore the abnormal. Spectators who go to movies lead normal lives. But they go there to see extraordinary things, to see nightmares. For me, the cinema is not a slice of life but a piece of cake.[167]

[167] Naremore, 1993, 180

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